





THE
LIFE AND THEATRICAL TIMES

OF

CHARLES KEAN, F.S.A.

INCLUDING A SUMMARY OF

THE ENGLISH STAGE FOR THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

BY JOHN WILLIAM COLE.

“ Orator ad vos venio ornatu prologi :

Sinite exorator ut sim.—

Quia sciebam dubiam fortunam esse scenicam,

Spe incerta certum mihi laborem sustuli.”—TERENTIUS HECYRA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

My work, published at the close of the London Season, has reached a Second Edition much sooner than my warmest hopes could have anticipated. For this success I am entirely indebted to the indulgence of the public, and the highly complimentary tone of a great majority of the leading papers which have honoured me with their notice. To the latter, however, there have been a few remarkable exceptions. I pass these over without comment, being on all occasions an advocate for freedom of opinion, and feeling, in the present instance, abundantly satisfied with the general result.

JOHN WILLIAM COLE.

LONDON,

November, 1859.

P R E F A C E.

MANY reasons and suggestions not necessary to enumerate here, have induced me to offer these volumes, which have been long thought of, to the consideration of the public. Years of uninterrupted private friendship, and professional association of the most intimate nature with the leading personage of the work, have afforded me facilities and information which no one else possesses to the same extent. With these advantages and materials, I shall endeavour to add a faithful and, as I trust, a profitable contribution to the dramatic records of our country.

It is an easier, as well as a less delicate task, to write a memoir of the dead than of the living. Facts may be stated and opinions delivered with more unreserved confidence, and diminished danger of offence or controversy, when they relate to one whose transitory probation has been completed, whose earthly career is finally closed, and to whom may be applied the touching elegy of Shakespeare:—

“ Fear no more the heat of the sun,
Nor the furious winter’s rages ;
Thou, thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta’en thy wages.” *

In the present instance, we may safely foreshadow the future by the past, and predict with certainty

* Cymbeline.

that the end (far distant may it be) will crown the work, and that "the catastrophe will do no dishonour to the conduct of the piece." *

A biography must be undertaken by one of four persons: by the subject of it himself, by a stranger, an enemy, or a friend.

If a man chronicles his own deeds, although it is quite certain that he knows his motives of action and phases of thought, more minutely than they can be interpreted by another, human weakness interferes with a true delineation. In spite of himself, or his inherent conscientiousness, he will palliate or justify his errors, exaggerate his good intentions, or gloss them over to avoid the charge of egotism. If he descends to "Confessions," he commits moral suicide. The reputation of Rousseau, unenviable as it is, suffered immeasurably from his; and the fame of Lord Byron would have been tarnished for ever, if Moore had not consigned his "private diary" to the flames.

A stranger must acquire his knowledge from desultory sources, when and where he can; from current report, popular fallacies, general conversation, or imperfect documents. He can scarcely be ranked higher than a secondary evidence.

An enemy dips his pen in gall, misrepresents everything, and systematically distorts truth for the express purpose of presenting a repulsive portrait.

An honest friend is most to be depended on. He speaks from his own knowledge, has means at command, and may be expected to use them fairly. In this light I hope to be considered; and if the following pages evince a general disposition to praise rather than

* Junius.

to censure, I have at least chosen the less popular course of the two, and would rather be accused of partiality than malice.

A few passages, scattered here and there, have appeared before. They are my own, and I trust there is no plagiarism in borrowing from myself. I have been most anxious to state facts correctly. The opinions and inferences are merely ventured as the results of a single experience. Let them be taken at their value, and judged according to the weight of argument by which they are supported.

There are those who think that personal memoirs should be withheld altogether during the lifetime of the parties to whom they refer. In answer to this it may be observed, that the motives and actions of public men, in whatever positions they may be placed, are frequently misrepresented or open to erroneous interpretation. Surely, under such circumstances, those who know them best are permitted, if they are not absolutely called upon, to rectify mistakes before they are sanctioned by time, or receive the stamp of current value in the absence of refutatory explanation.

JOHN WILLIAM COLE.

LONDON,

July 25, 1859.

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THE

LIFE AND THEATRICAL TIMES

OF

CHARLES KEAN, F.S.A.

CHAPTER I.

THE SUBJECT OPENED—BIRTH OF CHARLES KEAN—BRIEF RETROSPECT OF THE EARLY STAGE IN ENGLAND—BETTERTON—BOOTH—QUIN—GARRICK—HENDERSON—JOHN KEMBLE—GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE—WILLIAM T. LEWIS—REPUTED DECLINE OF THE MODERN STAGE, AND CAUSES THEREOF—INCREASE OF THEATRES—MULTIPLICATION OF ACTORS—RELATIVE NUMBER OF THEATRES IN LONDON AND PARIS—UNFITNESS OF ASPIRANTS FOR DRAMATIC HONOURS—DRUDGERY OF INFERIOR ACTORS—FASCINATIONS PECULIAR TO ACTING—A MANAGER'S CORRESPONDENCE—HOW ACTORS MIGHT BE TRAINED—OVERFLOW OF MODERN AUTHORS—GARRICK'S MISTAKES IN THE SELECTION OF NEW PLAYS—PERPLEXITIES OF MANAGEMENT.

CHARLES JOHN KEAN, the leading object of this work, and the most prominent character in the following pages, was born on the 18th of January, 1811. From about that date, we propose to bring together a few passing records of the art with which his name is so honourably and inseparably associated, and to accompany these details with such reflections as the subject may suggest. Historians and biographers usually preliminarize in a lengthened introduction, in which they

often go back to a remote period, connecting antecedents with actualities, and tracing effects from causes in a complicated chain. The long-winded advocate in Racine's comedy ("Les Plaideurs") opens his case "before the commencement of the world;" whereupon the dismayed judge directs him at once to "pass on to the deluge." We abstain from such remote retrospection for several reasons. In the first place, because Horace, an acknowledged preceptor in composition, has laid down a contrary rule, and recommends plunging at once "*in medias res*;"—Secondly, because introductory chapters are usually passed over by impatient, rapid readers, who form a strong majority;—and, Thirdly, from the impossibility of saying anything new or interesting on matters which have been worn threadbare in a thousand specific volumes, and a whole library of detached essays and lectures.

All who have bestowed any attention on theatrical topics are well aware that the precursors of the Drama in England (and other countries of modern Europe) were mysteries and moralities, founded generally on sacred subjects, and sometimes handled with singular irreverence:—that in time, these strange conceptions gave way to interludes and plays of rude construction and homely incident; of which "Gammer Gurton's Needle," by Bishop Still, and "Gorbodue," by Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and Thomas Norton, may be named as amongst the earliest and most remarkable; that the sun of Shakespeare rose and expanded to unparalleled perfection under the fostering patronage of Elizabeth and the first James; that his contemporaries and immediate successors were Heywood, Lyly, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Marston, Green, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Ford, Massinger, and others of less note; that, in 1633, theatres and plays had become so popular and licentious that they

excited the ire of the puritanical Prynne, who denounced them and their frequenters in a monstrous *helluo librorum*, entitled, "Histriomastix; or, the Players' Scourge and Actors' Tragedie," a quarto of one thousand and twelve close pages (that nobody ever read through), which took nine years to compile, and seven to print, and cost the author his worldly substance, his ears, and his liberty; that during the long quarrel between Charles I. and his parliament the theatres were suppressed, and nothing flourished but "civil dudgeon," and cut-and-thrust polemics; that the actors fought, like loyal subjects, on the king's side; that some were killed, and others promoted; that, under the Protectorate, they gained precarious bread by stealth; that, at the Restoration, they again basked in the rays of royal favour, but that foreign taste and corrupted fashion banished Shakespeare for a while; that he was re-installed by Betterton, to whom succeeded Booth, who was followed by Quin, who was deposed by Garrick, who substituted nature and passion for frigid declamation, and established what was then called the new school, which would now be considered as stiff, formal, and antiquated as the cumbrous court suits and powdered wigs in which (to use honest *Bottom's* phrase) he discharged the heroes of the tragic drama. There he stands, taken from the life, in Zoffany's painting of the murder scene in "Macbeth" (now in the unrivalled gallery of the Garrick Club), with Mrs. Pritchard by his side, and looks the *beau ideal* of a small state-coachman in full and gorgeous livery on a gala day. The pair are much more suggestive of the butler and housekeeper contriving the death of the intoxicated squire than of a Saxon or Celtic thane and his helpmate of the eleventh century perpetrating the murder of a sleeping king. Prodigious, indeed, must have been the talent that

could triumph over the associations which such a grotesque costume inevitably provokes.

The secession of Garrick in 1776 made way for Henderson, who did wonders, in defiance of more physical deficiencies than even those of Le Kain, the great French Roscius. But he was cut off prematurely by an accident, in 1785, before he had completed his thirty-eighth year.* Then the Kemble dynasty reigned for more than a quarter of a century in acknowledged supremacy. George Frederick Cooke came, like a meteor, in 1800, and, as he said himself, "made black Jack tremble in his shoes;" but irregular habits marred his fortunes and enfeebled his genius. In 1810, he departed for America, whence he returned no more. His death took place at New York, on the 26th of September, 1812. The physician who attended him in his last illness said, that systematic intemperance had destroyed one of the finest constitutions that man could have possessed. Edmund Kean, who partly modelled himself on Cooke, and surpassed his original, erected a monument to his memory when he visited the New World.

When sober and himself, Cooke was not only a great actor but a well-bred gentleman in appearance, manner, and conversation. When drunk, he degenerated into a noisy, brutish bacchanal, fit only to herd with the rout of Comus or Silenus. His style was as opposite to that of Kemble as can possibly be conceived. It was fiery, impulsive energy, opposed to dignified collectedness; quick, impassioned utterance, instead of regulated intonation; epigrammatic terseness and pungency, in place of lofty eloquence; rapid motion and

* His wife gave him a wrong medicine by mistake—an embrocation instead of a draught—which killed him. She was never made acquainted with the immediate cause of his death.

gesticulation, rather than studied attitudes, or lengthened pauses. Deficient in artificial refinement, he sought to be natural. In a soliloquy, he was eminently effective. Instead of flourishing about, and crossing the stage backwards and forwards, as many actors do, he concentrated himself, and stood almost motionless, not addressing the audience, or making them a party to his thoughts, but wrapped up in a kind of self-conference, in which the soliloquizer may be said to be communing with his own soul.

Cooke was not gifted with the elegant figure and deportment of John Kemble. His arms were short, and his movements abrupt and angular. His features were powerfully expressive of the darker passions, and he had a strong vein of sarcastic humour. His voice, though somewhat high and sharp in its ordinary tone, possessed great compass, and carried him without failure through the most arduous character; a pre-eminence over his rival in which he absolutely revelled, and never omitted to exercise when he found an opportunity. His best parts were *Iago*, *Richard the Third*, *Glenalvon*, *Shylock*, *Stukely*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Kitely*, *Sir Archy MacSarcasm*, and *Sir Pertinax MacSycophant*. The latter, as a whole, may be considered one of the most complete pictures ever presented on the stage. Those who have seen it (and a few still survive) can never forget the impression it left upon them. Of Cooke's many followers, the late Charles Young was the only one who recalled their prototype in this particular character. All the others were either tame, or outrageously coarse, without humour.* King George III. commanded the "Man of the World" five

* Mr. Phelps must be quoted as a living exception. He never could have seen Cooke. We have not witnessed his performance, but have heard it highly extolled by good judges.

times in two seasons, and declared that Cooke's *Sir Pertinax* surpassed all that he recollected of Garrick in his very best assumptions. Cooke's genius confined itself to a narrow range. It was well remarked by a critic of the day, that he did not play many parts to perfection, but that he played those in which he really excelled better than anybody else. That critic had not then seen Edmund Kean, who went beyond Cooke in *Shylock*, *Richard*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*, not to speak of his *Othello*, in which he stood alone and unapproachable.

We must here request our readers to go back with us for a year or two, behind the commencement of our proposed reminiscences, while we give a short paragraph to the memory of William Thomas Lewis, of whom, we believe, no separate biography has ever been written. He came to London in 1773, and retired on the 29th of May, 1809. The Covent Garden company, being recently burnt out of their own theatre, were then playing at the Haymarket. Lewis took leave in his favourite character of *Michael Perez*, the "Copper Captain." For a long time, during his early progress, he was compelled to toil, with adverse attributes, in tragic parts. In these he acquitted himself respectably; but in the more congenial line of light comedy, he soon surpassed all competitors. In this walk, Elliston followed Lewis with a voice of greater power and variety, which enabled him to round off a sentiment or wind up a pathetic appeal with superior effect.

Lewis filled the difficult office of acting and stage manager at Covent Garden, for twenty years, with admirable tact and great practical skill. Few, in that invidious post, so thoroughly escaped the ill-will of authors and performers. The former he easily made his friends, for he was the chief support of modern comedies;

but the complaints of the latter he was sometimes obliged to bear, which he did with most enviable equanimity of temper. His style suffered from the extravagant parts which the authors of the day, and Reynolds in particular, thought proper to write for him in their five-act farces. In these he received great applause; but no judicious observer would place his performance of such ephemeral eccentricities on a level with his *Ranger*, *Mercutio*, or *Benedick*. "I saw him," says Cooke in his Journal (quoted in Dunlap's Memoirs), "in his best style, before he descended to be the genteel buffoon of modern farce, miscalled comedy. For thirty years he was the unrivalled favourite of the laughing Muse, in all that was gay, frolicsome, humorous, whimsical, and, at the same time, elegant." He then adds, "Billy Lewis, as a stage manager, was the model for making every one do his duty by kindness and gentlemanlike treatment."

Lewis had a natural animation, an overflowing exuberance of spirits, which never tired, and of which modern audiences and actors have not the most remote conception. Were he to be suddenly produced now, he would be pronounced insufferably extravagant, and set down as a lunatic escaped from Hanwell or Bedlam. We have seen *light comedians*, as they are called, and call themselves (heaven save the mark!), take more time with a sentence than he usually allowed to a scene. The very sound of his voice at the wing, before he entered, was the signal for mirth and increased pulsation, which flagged no more until the curtain fell. He was never quiet for an instant. His speed anticipated the express train and the electric telegraph. He was here, there, and everywhere, in a twinkling, always doing something; and although it must be admitted that he not unfrequently "o'erstepped the modesty of

nature," yet there was a grace and a charm in his extravagance, and an epidemic infection in his hilarity, which belonged to himself alone. Long before the audience had time to think whether he was right or wrong, or whether they ought to laugh or appear shocked, he was off to something else, which carried them along with him in spite of themselves, and drowned criticism in a tempestuous whirlwind of applause. "Push on, keep moving," was his perpetual maxim and practice. To be tame or prosy, when by his side on the stage, was utterly impossible. He was well versed in every minute point connected with the mechanism of the dramatic art, and the means of producing the most certain effects. One of his favourite axioms was, that no change of dress, however characteristic or essential, no excellence in acting, could restore the good temper of the audience, or revive their excitement, if either should be interrupted by a long wait between the acts. Perhaps he learned this during his early acquaintance with our old friends of the Dublin gallery, who, in days of yore, never failed to cry, "Up with the rag!" even before the act-drop, so classically designated, had time to reach the ground.

Reader, you probably remember, and may have often seen, the late Richard Jones. He was a lively, agreeable, gentlemanlike, animated actor, but be assured that he was not William Thomas Lewis, who has never had a legitimate successor, or an equal in his peculiar vein—unless, perhaps, we may be induced to consider Elliston as entitled to the inheritance.

Lewis died within two years after his retirement, aged sixty-three. Amongst his best characters may be reckoned, *Belcour*, *Rover*, *Ranger*, *Mercutio*, *Petruchio*, the *Copper Captain*, *Benedick*, *Millamour*, *Atall*, *Marplot*, *Lackland*, *Vapid*, *Goldfinch*, *Tom Shuffleton*, and

Jeremy Diddler. His son, the late Thomas Lewis, many years lessee of the Liverpool Theatre, bequeathed, in an evil moment, a celebrated full-length portrait of his father, as the *Marquis*, in the "Midnight Hour,"—an admirable likeness and painting,—to the National Gallery. Who has ever seen it there? and in what dark lumber-room or damp cellar is it condemned to rot? Far better would it have been to have left such a memorial to the Garrick Club (the house was once his private residence), where it would have been hung up in light and warmth, equally safe from the rats and the remorseless restorer.

That the stage has declined in modern times, and that the true love for the drama has evaporated, more especially amongst the higher classes, are assertions so often repeated, and so generally believed, that it may appear hopeless to combat them. In support of these assumed facts, a host of causes are duly assigned; some substantial, others visionary, but all tending to the same effect. Amongst them are prominently set forward,—the degeneracy of living actors; the incompetence of managers; the constantly increasing number of theatres; the annulling of the old law of limitation; the bad taste of the public, which inclines in other directions; the spread of education, that mighty leveller, which dispels all mists, opens all eyes, and brings all seeming marvels down to their true standard; the late dinner hour; the all-absorbing spirit of speculation; the decrease of cash; the increase of outward piety; the income-tax; the rail-roads, which carry all the world to see everything somewhere else; the rapid character of the age, which fevers the blood of humanity, and incapacitates everybody from listening patiently to any one given subject for half an hour at a time; the vast multiplication of cheap amusements, in and out of doors; mechanics' institutes, "*salons musicales*,"

clubs and debating societies, casinos, monster concerts, drum polkas, and music for the million; lectures on every conceivable science and invention; mesmerism, table-rapping, spirit-raising, and clairvoyance; phrenology, geology, toxicology, ontology, nosology, and electro-biology.* These, and other objections which baffle enumeration, are brought to bear on the question with the crushing force of a breaching battery or an avalanche. What can be advanced on the other side, in arrest of judgment? It is useless to argue; we must look for facts.

The date of Charles Kean's birth falls within the period which has been called, by a hackneyed and pedantic figure, "the palmy days of the drama." According to the census of 1811, London, in its extended capacity, then contained 1,009,546 inhabitants. There were within this boundary eleven theatres: three with what were considered perpetual patents, Drury Lane and Covent Garden unrestricted as to time, the Haymarket open in the summer only; and eight minors limited to certain periods and performances. In this list, the Italian Opera House is not included, being then, as now, looked upon in the light of an exotic exception. In 1859, the population of this overgrown metropolis approaches two millions and a-half, and has more than doubled within forty-eight years; while, despite the supposed counteracting influences, the number of places in which, under various names, stage representations are given, amount at least to twenty-eight. There are not so many in Paris, although the French capital has long been universally quoted as, beyond all comparison, the most theatrical city in the world. The population, it is true, is little more than half that of London; but mere extent of

* The latest of the *Ologies*. What does it mean!

population is no criterion by which to test the love of amusement. All Paris lives in the theatres.

The London patents, alluded to above, if they still exist, have ceased to possess any value. They resemble the hereditary championship—a nominal office, of which the duties are in abeyance. The Lord Chamberlain's annual licence, wherever it extends, has abrogated exclusive privileges, and sanctions dramatic performances generally, without reference to the vexed questions of legitimate and illegitimate, regular and irregular—questions on which much ink and argument have been unprofitably wasted, and which never were, and never could be brought to any conclusive definition. It may be added, as a corollary, that although adaptations from the French, and melo-dramatic spectacles, have many followers, the great plays of Shakespeare are more popular, more attractive, and more frequently represented now, than at any former epoch which may be selected for parallel.

From these facts, the following inferences may be mathematically deduced:—

Notwithstanding the despondent prophecies and elegiac lamentations of the elders, who are ever exclaiming that our pure national drama is dying, dead, and buried; who aggrandize the past at the expense of the present, and advocate the inherent decay of every human invention,—the stage is still alive, and flourishing in wholesome vigour.

The taste for the drama has increased rather than declined, and in the right direction, from which it wandered only in the absence of trustworthy guide-posts.

The extinction or deterioration of what were once called the two great national theatres, the double Palladium of dramatic prosperity, has neither extinguished nor deteriorated Shakespeare.

And, finally, there is no lack of brilliant living talent on the stage, although not concentrated, as formerly, in one or two prominent fields of action. The three-deckers may not be as numerous, but the aggregate weight of metal is much greater.

When Liston, during his early apprenticeship at Newcastle-on-Tyne (where he was a great favourite) quarrelled with the manager, Stephen Kemble, and threatened to resign his engagement unless relieved from an inferior part, the burly autocrat told him that he might go as soon as he pleased, for actors were to be found under every hedge. He was wrong.* More than fifty years later, Charles Kemble, in the course of his examination before the Committee of the House of Commons, on the theatrical question, informed that august section of elected legislature, that they might, if they pleased, build theatres at the corner of every street in London, but that actors were beyond the creative powers of Parliament. He was right.

Yet actors (such as they are) have been forthcoming on demand, as fresh merchandise finds its way into the market, according to increased consumption. But the new supply, though abundant in quantity, is not equal in quality to the ancient stock. The living talent, of which we have already spoken, is to be sought for amongst the scattered remains of the "Old Guard," rather than in the ranks of their half-educated recruits. Fifty years ago, an engagement in London amounted to a settlement for life. As soon as a new actor's position was ascertained in one of the national theatres, he left it

* A day or two after, while taking a walk in the fields, King Stephen observed his rebellious subject seated in a ditch, carefully watching the opposite hedge. "What are you doing there, Mr. Liston," said he, "when you ought to be at rehearsal?" "Looking for actors, sir," replied the son of Momus, "but I haven't found any yet."

no more ; service became inheritance, as in other communities. To obtain this post, he waited for a vacancy, and then graduated in due course, from Dublin, Edinburgh, Bath, or Liverpool. These were the acknowledged training-houses from whence supplies were regularly drawn for the metropolitan boards. They exist no longer as such. Cheap prices and free trade have brought them down to the level of large minors. Railroads carry all who have cash and curiosity, to see the attractive novelties produced in London, long before they can reach the out-quarters. Our ancestors ventured on long journeys once or twice in a century. Their descendants half live in an express train. The twenty-eight theatres and theatrical saloons of the metropolis are ever in want of hands. They tempt away the rising talent while crude and half-drilled, and, in nine cases out of ten, induct it into a worse school than it has quitted.

The modern disciples of Thespis, it must be admitted, are not as soundly brought up as were their predecessors under the old system, and many of them are ill qualified for a profession which demands high intellect, varied acquirements, polished bearing, and regular gentlemanlike habits. This might be remedied, and the theatre elevated to its proper position, if the authorities could be induced to consider the stage, as in other countries, a portion of the state, and a valuable implement in the hands of government. But this is not within the category of probabilities. For who is there to take such an enlarged view, to break down the barriers of precedent and routine, and to reason prejudice into an experiment which would surely be rejected on proposal as equally unimportant and impracticable ?

They take a very different view of these matters in Paris, where the four leading theatres, which are con-

sidered national, receive an annual grant of 1,160,000 francs (48,333*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*), apportioned as follows:—

To the Académie Impériale	620,000 fr.
„ Théâtre Français	200,000 „
„ Opéra Comique	240,000 „
„ Odéon	100,000 „

The young actors of the present day are, perhaps, the fastest pupils of a fast age. They are not content to walk before they run: nothing satisfies them but to begin with a gallop. “Vaulting ambition,” in their eyes, supersedes the necessity of education—education in general, and theatrical education in particular. Inclination is too often mistaken for genius, while inclination itself is frequently prompted by idleness. Luxurious midshipmen, in the olden times, who disliked the severe discipline of the fore-castle and mast-head, were wont to exclaim, “I can’t stand this any longer; I’ll sail large, and bear up for a marine”—the marine officer’s life being considered one of unmingled ease. He kept no watch, superintended the mess, played all day at backgammon, and slept eleven hours on an average. All he had to do was to fight when required, which he did most gallantly.

In the same manner, aspiring youngsters, who groan under the monotonous drudgery of the office or the counter, suddenly behold bright visions of fame and fortune through the certain, immediate, and easy avenue of the stage. Vain is it to reason with man or woman, youth or damsel, when he or she is once imbued with the theatrical mania. Nothing satisfies them but the experiment, which, in a great majority of cases, eventuates in utter failure or hopeless mediocrity. Success and profit will smoothe the roughest road, and lighten the heaviest task; but obscurity and small pay, joined to hard work,

are enough to break the back of Hercules himself. The life of a galley-slave is not enviable, but it may be looked upon as one continued siesta when compared with that of the rank and file, or utility-men of a theatre. How they get through the duties of their position is beyond a miracle. In a pantomime, for instance, they represent, on the average, four characters in the opening, with treble that number in the comic sequel, and a change of dress for each. Young ambitionists of honours histrionic, who are weary of their indentures, and fancy they have souls for poetry, figure to themselves the stage as a haven of refuge and enjoyment, a nice, jolly, easy, idle kind of do-nothing life. Let them begin at the beginning, and enlist as utilitarians for the run of the Christmas spectacle. There is nothing like experience for cooling down enthusiasm. Long before their term of service has expired, they will petition for dismissal, commit some breach of discipline to entail immediate discharge, or use interest for a speedy exchange into the comparative comfort and relaxation of the tread-mill.

Truly there must be a fascination in acting peculiar to itself, and beyond that fabulously attributed to the basilisk or the rattle-snake. As war is called "the needy bankrupt's last resort," so is the stage often considered a certain resource for all who are unfit for anything else, or too lazy to learn the rudiments of a laborious calling. It is the only trade which teaches itself, or comes by inspiration, without apprenticeship. As Pitt was a "heaven-born minister," why not a perfect actor, without practice? "I think I could do it quite as well, if not better!" This is a common delusion of the conceited, untried, theatrical tyro who from pit or gallery listens to the applause which a Kemble or a Kean can only elicit after twenty years of

hard service. It is worse than useless to point this out to him. He pages you with ready instances, and tells you of Holland, and Powell, and Mossop, and the elder Sheridan, who became great actors all at once; and of Spranger Barry who stepped from behind a counter on the boards a perfect *Othello*, *Jaffier*, and *Varanes*, and two years afterwards shook Garrick on his throne. All this, and more to the same effect was once said to an experienced manager, by a shambling, blear-eyed strippling, without a voice, and scarcely five feet one in stature, who panted to come out in Hamlet or Macbeth. It was remarked to him in reply, that Barry was singularly gifted by nature with physical requisites, such as are seldom combined in the same individual, and that without some external advantages, and at least, moderate lungs, the case would be hopeless. "Oh," said he contemptuously, "genius can do without such paltry aids. Le Kain, the great French tragedian, was little and deformed, with a cast in one eye, a defective utterance, and an ugly, inexpressive face. Henderson's voice was thick, he spoke as if his mouth was stuffed with worsted, had flat features and a clumsy figure. Garrick was diminutive and inclined to fat, and Edmund Kean was often husky." Heaven only knows where he had picked up these rebutting facts, for he seemed perfectly uneducated, and rejoiced in a broad, provincial accent, which made the blood curdle.

A manager's correspondence supplies a curious and varied chapter in the history of human character. It includes remonstrances and applications from authors, actors, amateurs, and ambitious aspirants; anonymous counsellors, anxious partisans, secret enemies, petitioners with claims, and pretenders without any; useful and useless hints, friendly and hostile admonitions from well-wishers and evil-wishers; threatenings and denuncia-

tions from the discharged, the rebellious, the neglected, the ill-treated, or the incompetent.

The following are genuine specimens, culled from a huge mass, preserved by the parties to whom they were addressed, and submitted to the selection of the writer of these volumes :—

“ Sir—i am a yung man is dasiros of actin sheekspeer in yur theter. I hav had a gud eddicashun, and am careless of trubl and ixpinsis—I luk for no remuneration shong i am worthy to command, an in the meane time waite yure plaisure. an anser to a B at 3 Boot lane will cunfur obbligashun. i doe not minshun my name till resaiving a favrite anser.

Yours &c.

PATRICK FLYNN.”

Here is another, in a different strain, from a fair lady :—

“ I have long resolved on a plunge which will determine the colour of my future life. The stage is my passion, and I am well read in the best dramatic authors. I have never acted, but have rehearsed before good judges, who assure me I shall soar above all competition. I wish to know what I am to expect for three performances of *Lady Macbeth*, *Julia* in the ‘Hunchback,’ and *Ophelia*; the three plays, altered and re-written by myself to suit my own conceptions. I am twenty-three, my figure is *petite*, and has been pronounced faultless. My features are expressive, my eyes and hair of the raven’s hue, and my voice melodious. I do not think much of any actress now on the stage; and have formed ideas of my own, which I shall be happy to communicate on a proper understanding, if this letter leads to what I expect, an interview. The bearer waits for your reply.”

On this occasion, managerial curiosity excited a desire to see the correspondent. Time and place being appointed, she came in form, attended by a duenna, and presented to view a little, corpulent, swarthy personage, unquestionably on the shady side of thirty-five, and altogether what the French ungallantly call *laide a faire peur!* Nothing could exceed her astonishment and indignation when she found her views discouraged, and her improvements on Shakespeare and Sheridan Knowles denied a hearing.

A third letter ran thus :—

“ Sir,—I feel very desirous to ‘smell the lamps.’ I have been flattered by friends that ‘my mission’ is decidedly to preach Shakespearcanity. I shall esteem it a favour your informing me your terms for a dozen lessons in elocution. This is all I require for my stock-in-trade.”

A fourth contained a more formidable announcement :—

“ Sir,—I am a riter of tradgedys, and with gode inspirashun, can doe one in a week. I have a large stok reddey. If you will name a time when I can call uppon you the terms will sone bi settled. I was burn (Qy. born ?) a poet.”

No. 5, varied again :—

“ Sir,—Should there be a vacancy for a junior actor in your theatre, I should be happy to offer myself as a candidate. I am eighteen years of age, and of good, plain English education. I have never figured on the stage, but have a great desire to do so. I can have excellent testimonials, am a great reader, and six feet two in height.”

No. 6 resembles the preceding :—

“ I hope you will excuse me for the trouble I give you, but I am so terrible stage-struck I cannot help it. A few gentlemen advised me to write to you, to try and get on the stage. I acted but once, that was in the ‘ Lady of Lyons.’ I acted *Claude*. I would rival you, if such a thing could be.”

No. 7 is singular and interesting, from a lowly but educated youth, written and spelt correctly, and suggestive of very salutary reflections :—

“ Sir,—I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus writing to you, and which I have no doubt you will when you know the cause that prompts me to do so. I am in my nineteenth year, and finding that Heaven has gifted me with talents for both poetic and dramatic writing, I appeal to your world-famed generosity for support ; being so poor myself that I can hardly furnish paper to write upon. I have been employed for the last two years in the Great Western Railway as engine-cleaner at 1s. 6d. per day !—upon which small sum I have managed to live honestly ; but now even that has failed me, and as a last resource I look to you for assistance, which, if refused, I know not where to turn my thoughts but to the army.

“ I do not write to you, Sir, as a humble petitioner for money, but as one conscious of the powers which Providence has bestowed upon him, and feels it a duty to seek for that aid which would enable him to use them to advantage. I have written a great deal, both poetic and dramatic, and mostly in those hours when I should be resting my body after the toil of the day, but which for want of patronage I have not been able to turn to any good. Therefore if you could give me

any berth in the theatre where my services would be worth 12s. per week, that I might be enabled to pursue my literary labours, the everlasting prayers and thanks should be due of

“ Your very humble and obedient Servant,

* * * * *

“ P.S. I inclose a few of my pieces in their first writing (which I have not been able to finish for want of time), as specimens, leaving to yourself to judge what difference is caused by leisure, place, and position in such kinds of composition. I should be for ever grateful if you would give me an audience. Will call on Monday, 10 A.M.

“ *Dec. 21st, 1855.*”

The last epistle we shall quote at present is of a higher order than No. 7, and even more painful in character :—

“ I am the son of a clergyman, and lately a member of the University of Cambridge. My father has left me to work my own way in the world,—in fact to live by my wits, and I see nothing before me save the stage or enlistment, as my education fits me for nothing else. I need not say I should prefer the former, and could you give me any employment, however small the emolument, and in the humblest capacity, I should be much obliged. In short, if there be any post in your establishment in which a gentleman, and, if I may so call myself, a scholar, may be of use to you, I shall rejoice to fill it, and do my best to merit your approval.”

In every scientific or intellectual profession, the stage alone excepted, some rudimentary acquirement is deemed necessary. There must be instruction, preparatory discipline, examination, a qualifying certificate, a degree,

or a diploma. The elements of any single art can only be conquered by a regular course of study, while the art of acting, which combines many in one, is supposed to be attainable at once, by instinct or volition. On what rational principle can an actor be made off-hand more readily than a painter, a sculptor, an architect, an astronomer, a mathematician, an engineer, a medical practitioner, or a lawyer? It has often been thought and urged that schools or colleges might be established for the regular training of dramatic neophytes. Garrick more than once contemplated some institution for this purpose, but gave way before the apparent obstacles. These are numerous, no doubt, but not insurmountable. The most difficult to grapple with is the general apathy on the subject which unfortunately prevails, and is likely to increase.

It can scarcely be disputed, that the stage will continue to exist as long as civilization lasts and human nature retains its present development. Next to the religious principle, a desire to imitate in action is the strongest innate feeling of the human mind. The first indication of reason that a child gives, is to copy something that it has seen or heard. The propensity is universal. Blind fanatics may persuade themselves and endeavour to convince their listeners, that theatres are purely Satanic in origin and influence, and that they will be, or ought to be, abolished. As well might they attempt to alter the system of creation. They would employ their time to more advantage in trying to elevate what they cannot overturn. Why should not the stage be regulated and improved by salutary restrictions and indispensable education? In many countries on the continent the number of physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries is strictly regulated by municipal law, according to the population of the town or district, and

the bills of mortality proclaim the advantage of the enactment. If actors were confined within the same limitations, and the exercise of their vocation pronounced unlawful without a certificate, both art and artists would hold their heads higher than they do at present; they would rise in general estimation; the social and political utility of either would be increased, and the stage would then become permanently what Cicero says it was intended for, "*Imitatio vite, speculum consuetudinis.*"

The uninitiated in the arcana of theatrical government will scarcely believe in the number of new pieces, of every conceivable form and construction, which are sent in every season for acceptance. Half a dozen per week is a moderate computation for a leading metropolitan theatre. There is a continual glut of dramatic genius in the market, if bulk be taken as a test of merit. Then follows the physical labour of reading them all, either in person or by competent deputy. Many authors are so impatient, that they propose to call the next day for an answer; and some will even wait, or come back the same evening. The manager's most dreaded nightmare is when the applicant proposes to read his own play. It has been said, and loudly echoed (by themselves), that writers of talent and brilliant promise have been crushed or held back by the tyranny of theatrical potentates, who, from utter ignorance and incapacity, from want of common judgment, from pique or undue partiality, or from sheer laziness, are given to discard good plays, and to adopt bad ones; or to reject indiscriminately all the rich prizes that are offered to their acceptance. Such things have happened certainly, but not often. Managers may commit errors, like other people, but it is reasonable to suppose that they study their own interest, and understand something of their own business. If they do not, they suffer in a tender point, in the pocket,

and pay dearly for mistakes. A balance on the wrong side of the ledger is a great remover of prejudices.

Garriek was thrifty and acute, generally right in his tactics, cautious, clear, and calculating; but still not infallible. He either would not, or could not see the talent of Mrs. Siddons, and Henderson. This might be jealousy, for he was an incarnation of that weakness; he trembled and fidgetted even if Punch obtained a larger audience than usual. An author himself, he undervalued and feared to accept Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man," while living on the most friendly terms with him; he played fast and loose with his comedy, tortured him by vexatious delays, winding up with a refusal; drove him to Covent Garden, and lost "She Stoops to Conquer," which met with the greatest success, and still holds its place on the acting list. He was also blind to the merit of Home's "Douglas," which he repudiated, while he accepted subsequently, "Agis," the "Siege of Aquileia," and the "Fatal Discovery," three very inferior, unattractive, and forgotten productions from the same hand.

When Colman sent in his play of "The Africans" to Covent Garden, it fell to John Kemble to read it, in his capacity of acting-manager. The story is simply this. Three brothers of an African tribe are burnt out of their village by enemies, and fly to the woods with an aged mother. They are reduced to the last extremity of physical suffering, and cast lots that one may be sold to obtain sustenance for their parent. "What is this new thing of Colman's about?" said Harris to his partner and deputy; "Oh," replied Kemble (who had skimmed it carelessly, or perhaps had not quite recovered the preface to the "Iron Chest"), "it will never do. Here are three black men, who sell their mother." "Colman must be mad," rejoined Harris; "return it to him at once."

The play was afterwards produced at the Haymarket, and rather coldly received. Its moderate attraction arose principally from a ridiculous parody on "Will you come to the Bower," introduced by Liston, as *Matthew Mug*, and nightly encored.

Not a great many years since, a band of authors, who conceived themselves victimized by managerial caprice, formed a confederacy or club, and published at their own expense a series of plays entitled "The Rejected Drama," one or more of which they also contrived to get acted. But the public voice, in both experiments, vindicated the individual judgment. The authors stood condemned on their own evidence. They perpetrated self-immolation, as the Hindoo widows were wont to do at the Suttees, and as Thelwall would have done when tried for high treason in 1794, if he had persisted in pleading his own cause. "I'll make my own defence, I'll be hanged if I don't," whispered he to Erskine, his leading counsel. "You'll be hanged if you do," replied the future Lord Chancellor, calmly, which brought the refractory client to his senses in a twinkling. It is something to save a man from his friends, but it is even better to save him from himself.

What can induce any one to encounter the endless turmoil, the dissatisfaction, the risk, the anxiety, the incessant wear and tear, both mental and physical, which are inseparable from the management of a theatre? It must be one of three controlling impulses which entraps so many into this devouring maelstrom—lofty emulation, an enthusiastic passion for genuine art, or love of power; which last enthral the human species as rats are subdued and fascinated by prussic acid and oil of rhodium. The arch-enemy of man angles with many baits, but he catches more unwary victims with power than with any other lure in his magazine of temptations.

It has been often said, and truly, that a theatre represents an epitome of a kingdom, a microcosm or miniature of the great globe itself, a condensed edition of humanity, combining within its narrow limits all the complicated machinery, all the mingled passions, propensities, antipathies, conflicting interests and jarring feelings, which are exhibited on a more expanded scale in the political and moral legislation of a mighty empire. Man may be subdivided into distinct classifications, and each may retain its own identical characteristics; but a theatrical community alone embraces man *in extenso*, and calls into operation at once, and in bold relief, every variation of which his subtle components are susceptible. As Shakespeare said, with undeniable truth, "all the world's a stage," so may we transpose his apothegm, with equal fidelity, and say, "the stage reflects a picture of all the world." The philosopher who studies human nature can open few volumes in which he will find such ample information.

A manager of a theatre is a tolerably potent monarch, on a small scale, as far as mere power is concerned; that is, the power to order, direct, and control the internal economy of his little dominion, as swayed by judgment or prejudice. He may do good or evil, justice or injustice, and render those under him happy or miserable, to a considerable extent, according to the bent of his disposition, which may be benevolent or capricious, kind or cruel, mild or vindictive, long-suffering or impatient under contradiction. He is not compelled by the constitution of his kingdom to have either ministry or cabinet council unless he pleases; and can dismiss or rule without them if they interfere with troublesome suggestions, or run counter to his wishes. He can make a law, if one is wanted on an emergency, without waiting for the forms of a debate, or the cavils of opposition. He

has only to say, "let this be, *le Roi le vent*," affix his sign manual, send forth the edict, and the Sultan's Firman is not more implicitly acknowledged by his well-disciplined subjects. Mutiny is almost unknown, as a special article in the Codex Dramaticus provides that disobedience of lawful orders, or misprision of rebellion, is followed by constant discharge, without benefit of remonstrance.

But this exalted position has its "drawbacks," as the valet said of his place, which he would not change with the king, if his master only got drunk six nights in the week, and gave him a single chance. A manager does not of necessity inherit the purse of Fortunatus. His banker's book represents finity. He is often compelled to pause in an important enterprise for want of supplies. He has no power to levy constitutional taxes by Act of Parliament; his state resources are drawn from voluntary contributions alone. If the public and he happen to fall out, and take different views, his royal prerogative dwindles into an empty shadow, enveloped by harassing and unprofitable responsibility. Theodore of Corsica may be quoted as a substantial monarch in comparison.

Talleyrand, the witty and unscrupulous, defined the government of Russia as an absolute despotism, limited by assassination. He might have described a theatre also as an uncontrolled monarchy, not unfrequently bounded by an empty exchequer. In fine, to manage a theatre is to live in a perpetual fever of excitement, to wear out existence in hopes more constantly disappointed than realized, to see the best calculated arrangements shattered by an unforeseen casualty, and to be daily building up the fortunes of others, while you are hourly wasting your own health and store. More than one dramatic potentate has been compelled to take home

to himself the powerful description in which Spenser sums up the ills that beset the career of another class of popularity-seekers,—placemen and political dependents :—

“ To lose good days that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent,
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow,
To fret the soul with crosses and with cares,
To eat the heart through comfortless despairs,
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone !”

CHAPTER II.

COVENT GARDEN AND DRURY LANE BURNT DOWN IN 1808 AND 1809—APPLICATION FOR A THIRD PATENT REJECTED—O. P. RIOTS AT COVENT GARDEN—INJUDICIOUS PROCEEDINGS AND ULTIMATE SUBMISSION OF THE MANAGERS—STRENGTH OF THE COVENT GARDEN COMPANY—LIMITED ATTRACTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS—RETIREMENT OF MRS. SIDDONS—HER SUPPLEMENTAL RE-APPEARANCES—SUMMARY OF HER CAREER—HER OPINION AND JOHN KEMBLE'S OF THE DIFFICULTY OF ACTING—ANECDOTE FROM DOW'S HISTORY OF HINDOSTAN—IMPORTANCE OF SOUND CRITICISM—LUDICROUS MISTAKES AND MIS-STATEMENTS—CONVENTIONAL PHRASEOLOGY—EDMUND KEAN AND MRS. GARRICK—LEIGH HUNT AND HAZLITT AS THEATRICAL CRITICS—EXTRAVAGANT PREJUDICES OF THE LATTER—INSTANCES QUOTED—CONSOLATION FOR SUFFERERS.

ABOUT two years before the birth of Charles Kean, both the great theatres were burnt to the ground within five months of each other,—Covent-garden on the 19th of November, 1808; Drury-lane on the 24th of February, 1809. The close proximity of these lamentable events gave rise to many suspicions of foul play, but nothing ever transpired beyond surmise. The received opinion now is, that the first arose from accident, the second from shameful neglect. Covent Garden sprang again from its ashes in renovated splendour within twelve months. Drury Lane, being beset by heavier incumbrances, remained in abeyance for more than three years and a-half, until the 12th of December, 1812, during the greater part of which interval the company set up their standard at the Lyceum.

It is surprising that theatres are not burnt down more frequently than they are, considering the increased

danger arising from gas, if not properly tended (when is it so?), the indigenous facility of combustion, and the difficulty of watching the watchmen. A fire in a theatre may be prevented, but is not easily extinguished when once it gains head. The best precautions, next to a general system of carefulness, are, a small portable engine on the stage, with a fifty-foot hose attached, and a good supply of water ready in tanks on the roof. All the mischief is done in the first few minutes, while messengers are despatched for the brigade engines, the alarmed neighbours are shouting "Fire!" and a few are knocking their heads against each other, in a futile search for the plug, which, of course, no one can find at the critical moment. A fire-plug resembles a policeman—always in the way except when it is wanted. Tell-tale clocks are good common-place evidences of the care or neglect of the night guardians; but if these functionaries are experienced in their business, and "know what belongs to a watch," they can find out ways and means of putting them into such a thorough state of disrepair as would baffle the mechanical skill of Archimedes, or defy Mr. Hobbs, the great American pick-lock, to restore them to serviceable condition.

During the parliamentary session of 1810 and 1811, great efforts were made to obtain a patent for a third winter theatre. The bill to that effect, strongly supported, was thrown out chiefly through the exertions of Mr. Whitbread, who took much interest in the affairs of Drury Lane. His vehement opposition in the House of Commons decided the question in the negative. The promoters of the measure issued prospectuses, and wrote pamphlets containing many proposed reforms and good resolutions. Amongst others, no freedoms of any kind, or orders, even to authors and performers, were to be granted, on the ground that such privileges gave rise to

cabals, by introducing partisans for invidious purposes, or were used as matters of unlawful traffic, and often as decoys, to give a factitious appearance of success to a theatre deserted by the paying community. In the list they forgot to enumerate the best of all arguments on their side,—an *orderly* house is constitutionally a dull one. Your sons of freedom form a cold audience. They never applaud heartily, and discourage the lengthened run of a new piece. There they are in their places every night, and want variety. It is a curious fact in physiology that people who never visit a theatre until by some means or other they get on the free list, are seldom absent from it afterwards. They go, not from enthusiasm, but because they have nothing else to do. We think more highly of what we pay for than of that which we can obtain for nothing. Two or three shillings form a serious investment, and those who risk it do so with a full conviction that they will get value received for their money. They expect to be entertained, and the anticipation feeds the result. Their minds are predisposed to admire all they see and hear, rather than to cavil or criticise.

In 1811, Covent Garden had scarcely recovered from the celebrated O. P. riots, which destroyed the first season, and marred the opening of the second. A long and tedious account of these disgraceful proceedings is contained in two octavo volumes, entitled “The Covent Garden Journal,” compiled for Stockdale, and published by him in 1810. The facts, on the whole, are correctly, but not impartially, stated, the tone of the work being hostile to the proprietors beyond what they deserved. The public were more in the wrong, and more unreasonable in their demands, than were the managers in their proposed scale of prices, and the reasons assigned for the augmented tariff. Cobbett, the great radical of the

day, observed in his "Register," "the demand for old prices was unreasonable, as being a violation of the rights of property, and an attempt to compel people to sell entertainment at the price pointed out by the purchaser." The *Times* newspaper took another view, and said, "Let the company play to empty benches—let the public agree to desert the theatre—and the proprietors must come down." If the O. P. party had pursued this plan, nothing could have been said against them; but they had no right to disturb the quiet spectator, and prevent him from hearing what he had paid his money to hear. Right, however, on such occasions, is the last thing thought of. As *Kate Matchlock* says, in Steele's comedy of the "Funeral," "a war is a war;" so with the majority of playhouse insurgents, a riot is a riot, let the original cause be what it may.

The managers committed a fatal error in the employment of professional pugilists to coerce the refractory pit. This direct attack upon his independence, roused the ire of John Bull beyond fever heat, and induced him to exact severe and humiliating terms before he granted an amnesty to the vanquished authorities. Peace was at length concluded, after sixty-seven nights of unintermitting hostility. The dismissal of Brandon, the box book-keeper, was peremptorily and most unjustly insisted on, as a *sine quâ non*, although the unlucky official had merely obeyed orders, and discharged his duty faithfully to his employers.*

During this sharp rebellion, John Kemble, hitherto the popular idol, and the classic pillar of the stage, was nightly exposed, in his capacity of acting proprietor and manager, to the most scurrilous abuse and outrageous indignity. The conduct of the O. P. faction towards Charles Kemble was, if possible, still worse, as he held

* Brandon was subsequently reinstated.

no post in the obnoxious government, and it was never pretended that he had given them any personal offence. Yet he too was to be insulted, and for no reason on earth but because he was John's brother.

In the course of the dispute, much had been said and written against the increased number of private boxes, insinuating they were likely to be converted into places of assignation and intrigue. Cobbett said on this point, "As to the *private boxes*, considered as a source of *immorality*, I do not think much of that, being of opinion that the quantity of immorality will remain much the same, whether those boxes be public or private."

The year 1811, in which Charles Kean first saw the light, was one prolific in public events of great importance. Three battles were won by the English in Spain,—Barossa, Albuera, and Fuentes D'Onore; General Hill surprised Girard at Arroyo de Molinos, and nearly annihilated his corps; an action was fought between the British sloop, *Little Belt*, and the American frigate, *President*, which led to the subsequent war; more than half-a-million sterling was subscribed in England to relieve the sufferers by the French invasion of Portugal; the Duke of York resumed the office he had so long ably filled, of Commander-in-Chief; the Prince of Wales became Regent of the United Kingdom; and the fortunes of the French Emperor appeared to reach their consummation by the birth of a son. The theatres flourished, notwithstanding the heavy taxes, and the continual drain of the war, which seemed to resemble an interminable Chancery suit, or a never-ending game of chess, to be bequeathed to posterity.

The company at Covent Garden included great names: Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. C. Kemble, Mrs. H. Johnston, Mrs. Dickens, Mrs. Liston, Mrs. Davenport,

Miss Bolton, Miss S. Booth, Mrs. Gibbs, John and Charles Kemble, Young, Liston, Emery, Fawcett, Farley, Munden, Blanchard, Simmons, and Richard Jones. A wonderful phalanx of talent, such as we are not likely to see collected together again under the free trade system. Yet, "Henry the Fifth," reputed to be one of John Kemble's most successful revivals, attracted but five audiences; and the far-famed "Julius Cæsar" (in the following year), the renown of which rang through the world, with his own *Brutus*, the *Cassius* of Young, and the *Mark Antony* of Charles Kemble, a cast of the play which has never since been approached, could not command more than eighteen repetitions. Mrs. Siddons, then on the eve of her departure, acted only thirty-three times during the season of 1810-1811. The attractive novelty was, beyond all dispute, the grand melo-dramatic equestrian spectacle of "Timour the Tartar," written expressly for the display of live cavalry, and which, although produced so late as the 29th of April, ran, without intermission or failure, for forty-four nights.

Mrs. Siddons retired formally on the 29th of June, 1812, the night being announced as her benefit. She selected *Lady Macbeth* for her closing performance. Her friends insisted on having the play terminated, when she made her final exit, in the sleeping scene. There were those amongst the audience who disliked this abrupt conclusion, and expressed themselves to that effect; but they were overpowered and silenced. This extravagant compliment was an absurdity imported from enthusiastic Ireland. When Mrs. Siddons died towards the close of a tragedy, it had been for years usual in Dublin to drop the curtain immediately, as she was often so exhausted as to render it expedient to do so. But the case was quite different with regard to "Macbeth." It looked

like sacrificing Shakespeare to his representative. Thus, if she had selected the *Lady Constance* for her leave-taking, "King John" must have been cut short with the close of the third act.

After a pause of about twenty minutes, Mrs. Siddons was once more discovered, sitting at a table, simply attired in white. She rose, came forward, and delivered a poetical farewell, written for the occasion by her nephew, Mr. Horace Twiss.

A great actor or actress, after a premeditated and announced retirement, ought never to appear again. The curtain, once fallen, should rise no more. A return resembles a revival of the dead. Such yearnings, if voluntary, are as little entitled to respect as the resumption of imperial power by Maximian after his abdication. Mrs. Siddons was solicited in a very urgent manner to come back to the stage. A regular committee was formed for the purpose, but she had the good taste to resist their importunities. The gentleman who began the attempt greatly suspected that in her heart she wished to form a new engagement. Between the years 1813 and 1819, she acted on nineteen occasions, always without personal profit, and for benevolent purposes. Three of these performances were for the theatrical funds; ten for the advantage of the family of her deceased son, in Edinburgh; two at the express desire of the Princess Charlotte, in 1816; and four for the benefits of Charles Kemble and his wife. Her *real* last appearance occurred at Covent Garden, as *Lady Randolph*, on the 9th of July, 1819.* She was then within a few days of sixty-four, having been born on the 5th of July, 1755.

When Mrs. Siddons closed her regular professional career, in 1812, her powers had in no way declined, but her figure had become corpulent and unwieldy; so much

* For the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kemble.

so, that, latterly, cushions were brought and placed on the stage for her convenience in the dying scene of *Zara* in the "Mourning Bride." When she knelt to the Duke, as *Isabella* in "Measure for Measure," she was unable to rise without assistance.

This great actress, who may almost be said to have been born on the stage, was the eldest of a singularly gifted family. Her father, Roger Kemble, was a provincial manager and actor of good repute. In early youth, she lived for some time in a dependent condition with Lady Mary Greathead, at Guy's Cliff in Warwickshire, from whence, in her nineteenth year, she married for love; the object of her choice being Mr. Siddons, a performer in her father's company, an indifferent actor, but a very handsome man. She herself was in her youth transcendently beautiful, with every physical requisite that could lead to eminence on the stage. Yet her first appearance in London, in 1776, during Garrick's last season, amounted to a failure. She appeared as *Portia* in the "Merchant of Venice," without producing much effect, acted with the retiring Roscius as *Mrs. Strickland* in the "Suspicious Husband," and *Lady Anne* in "Richard the Third," and then subsided into *Venus* in the walking pageant of the "Jubilee." Six years later she returned in the full bloom of womanhood, after mature practice, and took the town by storm as *Isabella*, in Southern's "Fatal Marriage," which character she repeated twenty-five times during the season. Her supremacy was at once acknowledged, and never afterwards disputed. For thirty years she reigned without a rival. All who have written on the subject, and all who remember her personally, have agreed in saying that she far surpassed her ablest predecessors and contemporaries. She was, perhaps, the greatest tragic actress that ever trod the boards of any stage, or adorned the theatre of

any country ; but it would have been better for her fame if she had never attempted comedy. Nature, which had so bountifully lavished her gifts in other respects, denied the versatility which could command equal admiration in the double worship of the sister Muses.

It was no uncommon occurrence for females to be carried out of the house in fits during some of Mrs. Siddons' impassioned scenes in her early career ; and the actors declared that the best comedians, in the richest farces, failed to revive the spirits of the audience to mirth, so totally had she depressed them. Mrs. Clive came up from her retirement to see her act, and exclaimed, with honest enthusiasm, "It is all truth and beauty from beginning to end!" Dr. Johnson paid her several eloquent compliments when she visited him in Bolt Court. After she had retired, he loudly expressed his admiration to Dr. Glover, who was present. "Sir," said he, "she is a prodigiously fine woman!" "Yes, sir," replied Dr. Glover ; "but do you not think she is much finer on the stage, when adorned by art?" "Sir," rejoined Dr. Johnson, "on the stage art does not adorn ; nature adorns her there, and art glorifies her."

Mrs. Siddons studied laboriously and incessantly. She was never satisfied with her execution of any part, and thought she could improve it to the last. Bishop Horne, in his "Essays and Thoughts on various Subjects," has the following observations with regard to this fact :—"Mrs. Siddons, the famous actress, receiving many invitations to the houses of the great and opulent, excused herself from accepting any of them, because her time was due to the public, that she might prepare herself in the most perfect manner for the duties she had undertaken. When a clergyman is invited to spend his hours at card-playing, or chit-chat meetings, has he not an apology to make of the same kind, but of a more

important and interesting nature? And if he be deficient in the duties of *his* profession for want of so exercising himself, will not Mrs. Siddons rise up in judgment against him, and condemn him?" *

It has been recorded that John Kemble wrote out the part of *Hamlet* thirty times, and each time discovered some new and effective reading which had escaped him before. During his last season, he said, "Now that the failure of my physical powers has warned me to retire, I am only beginning thoroughly to understand my art." After Mrs. Siddons had left the stage, a friend, calling on her one morning, found her walking in the garden with a book in her hand. "What are you reading?" inquired the visitor. "You will hardly guess," replied she; "I am looking over *Lady Macbeth*, and am amazed to find some points in the character that never struck me until now."

Such is the true nature of the profession which the enemies of the stage are pleased to call idle, and casual observers, who enjoy the effect without knowing the labour by which it is accomplished, are apt to consider easy. They little know the constant exercise of mind and body it requires. As Cumberland has justly remarked, in his "Observer," "there is no calling or employment in life that can less endure the distractions of intemperance and dissipation." From Dow's History of Hindostan, the above-named writer has copied the following anecdote:—"During these transactions, the gates of Delhi were kept shut. Famine began to rage every day more and more, but the Schah was deaf to the miseries of mankind. The public spirit of Tucki, a famous actor, deserves to be recorded on this occasion. He exhibited a play before Nadir Schah, with which that monarch was so well pleased, that he commanded

* Bishop Home's Works, vol. i. p. 357.

Tucki to ask, and what he wished should be done for him. Tucki fell on his face, and said, 'O king, command the gates to be opened, that the poor may not perish.' His request was granted; half the city poured into the country, and the place was supplied in a few days with plenty of provisions." Few actors can expect to reach the eminence or good fortune of rescuing a city from starvation, but the humblest can render themselves useful and respectable members of society, and may aspire to catch a few of the reflected rays which the great lights of the profession have cast around the youngest and most complicated of the ornamental arts.

To return to Mrs. Siddons. In her youth she excelled in delineating the tender pathos of *Juliet*, *Belvidera*, *Monimia*, *Desdemona*, *Mrs. Beverley*, and *Isabella*. In these she drew as many tears as she commanded plaudits. As she became mature and matronly, the grander and more stately heroines identified themselves with her peculiar attributes. Amongst her best characters may be placed foremost, *Lady Macbeth*; *Zara*, in the "Mourning Bride;" *Margaret of Anjou*, in the "Earl of Warwick;" *Elvira*, *Constance*, *Queen Katharine*, *Volumnia*, *Hermione*, and *Lady Randolph*. She was not fortunate in original parts. Perhaps the greatest triumph of her genius was the importance and interest with which she contrived to invest the repulsive mistress of *Pizarro*, in Sheridan's inflated paraphrase of Kotzebue's melodrama. James Ballantine, Sir Walter Scott's friend and printer, editor of the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, and one of the ablest theatrical critics of his day, in a notice of what was then supposed to be Mrs. Siddons' last appearance in Edinburgh, on the 13th of March, 1812, thus sums up his eulogy—and those who never saw the subject of it may be assured that it is not in the slightest degree exaggerated:—"We have lost, and for ever, an artist,

whose performances rendered appropriate praise either difficult or unnecessary, and adequate praise impossible. Future times may wonder at, and perhaps doubt, in their honest love of some contemporary favourite, the magic wonders delivered to them by the present age, of the powers of Siddons; but we can only say, and, we think, truly say, that no sculptor or painter, in the sublimest flights of his fancy, ever embodied—no poet, in the most luxurious indulgence of his imagination, ever described—a creature so formed, so gifted, to agitate, to awe, and to astonish mankind by her professional powers as she whose matchless form, face, voice, and eye are now finally withdrawn from our public admiration." It is truly invigorating to read this manly, fervid tribute to exalted genius, untainted as it is by the leaven of critical restraint or exceptional qualification. And this leads us to say a few words on criticism in the abstract—an art which accompanies the art of acting as an inseparable pendant, freely indulged, as freely abused, and sometimes little understood by many of its practitioners.

No human excellencé has ever yet achieved universal suffrage. The most ambitious votary of fame must content himself with a majority. To be without detractors is a certain indication of mediocrity. Homer, Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle had their Zoilus and Aristarchus; Crebillon, Voltaire, and the wits of the age of Louis XV. had their Fréron; Addison and Pope their Dennis; Garrick his Ralph and Kenrick; Talma, Molè, and La Rive, their Geoffroy; and Charles Kean his Douglas Jerrold.

"Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;"

so said or sang the bard of Twickenham, in his celebrated essay. Professed critics will not be disposed to

admit the soundness of this dictum. Our modern Zoili are, to the full, as imperative in their decisions, and quite as well convinced of their infallibility, as were the ancient founders of their school. Perhaps the two easiest things in the world are, to give advice and to find fault; and these very faculties may be taken as the leading reason why both propensities are so constantly indulged. The converse of the proposition is equally true. Nothing can be more difficult than to give good advice or to find fault judiciously.

As the drama includes a combination of many arts, to examine and report correctly on the merits of a play or an actor, requires a far wider scope of knowledge, with a greater variety of acquirement, than would suffice to pronounce opinion on any particular poem, painting, or statue. In the vast quantity of theatrical criticism that passes under the public eye, we meet with endless theories, and very often these theories are extravagant and contradictory. The writers name promptly enough what appears to them erroneous, but they are not so ready to point out how error is to be rectified. They see the disease, but are usually unprovided with a cure. Amongst these gentlemen, some are also dramatic writers themselves—a questionable foundation for general impartiality. We should certainly not select them, by choice, on a special jury to try the merits of their brethren whose productions had been chosen by managers in preference to their own.

A novice in writing is apt to imagine that he can master the difficulties of criticism by inspiration. It is enough to be employed, and he becomes at once an *ex officio* oracle. Some are governed by *cliquerie*, private partiality, or personal prejudice. Others are bound together in a solemn league and covenant of dogmatical opinions, drawn within a narrow circle. Any dissenters

from their own code they impale with unsparing severity. Let it not be supposed that these remarks are intended for sweeping or universal application. We admit unhesitatingly that there are many honourable, independent, and accomplished exceptions.

Theatrical notices are, from necessity, often composed and committed to the press in a few hurried moments late at night, after the performance is over, when the writer is fatigued in body and jaded in mind, before he has allowed himself time to arrange his ideas, or to feel certain as to his own impressions. This part of the system was fully discussed in an article headed "London Newspapers and London Theatres," which appeared in No. 342 of *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* on the 20th of July, 1850. The author has evidently been behind the scenes, and is well acquainted with theatrical machinery.

Strange eccentricities are sometimes indulged in by professional chroniclers, who undertake to instruct the world on the passing events of the day. Criticisms have been written beforehand, in anticipation of the performance of a play duly announced, but suddenly changed in consequence of the illness of a principal performer; the writer not intending to be present, but having made up his mind as to who he should praise and who condemn. On the following morning the public have been enlightened with an elaborate disquisition on what never took place. More than once, in such cases, actions have been brought, and damages recovered for libel.

Stephen Kemble, during his management of the theatre at Newcastle-on-Tyne, severely punished a local journal which had assailed him by this hazardous mode of vituperation. The same course was adopted with equal effect by Jackson, of Edinburgh. On Saturday,

the 5th of October, 1805, a revival of Farquhar's comedy of the "Constant Couple" was announced for that evening at Drury Lane, but postponed on account of the illness of Elliston. A Sunday paper, however, contained the following account:—

"Last night, Farquhar's sprightly comedy of the 'Constant Couple' was most laboriously and successfully murdered at this theatre. Elliston tamed down the gaiety of *Sir Harry Wildair* with a felicity which they who admire such doings can never sufficiently extol. The gay knight was, by the care of his misrepresentative, reduced to a figure of as little fantastic vivacity, as could be shown by *Tom Errand* in *Beau Clincher's* clothes. *Beau Clincher* himself was quite lost in Jack Bannister; it was Bannister, not the *Clincher* of Farquhar, that the performance suggested to the audience. Miss Mellon was not an unpleasing representative of *Angelica*; but criticism has not language severe enough to mark, as it deserves, the impertinence of Barrymore's presuming to put himself forward in the part of *Colonel Standard*. We were less offended, although it was impossible to be much pleased, with Downton's attempt to enact *Alderman Snuggler*. But the acting was altogether very sorry."

The maligned actors brought an action against the authorities of the paper, who compromised, and got off cheaply, by paying 50*l.* to the theatrical fund.

During the summer of 1857, a morning paper published a studied criticism on the first performance of Madame Bosio and Mario, at the Italian Opera House, Lyceum, in "*La Traviata*," telling how the theatre was crowded from floor to ceiling, how the great singers were applauded, how they were called for at the end of each act, and how they were crowned with acclamations and bouquets at the close. There were also many flourishes on *andante* movements, ascending scales, *fioriture*, and other musical obscurities, known only to the chosen few who are learned in the Eleusinian mysteries of the opera. But the whole was a fiction, for the piece had been unexpectedly withdrawn, and another substituted. On the next day, an editorial apology announced the

summary discharge of the inventive reporter. We would suggest to gentlemen of this lively turn of imagination, 'that if they find it convenient to write their articles beforehand, common prudence might whisper that it is dangerous to commit them to press without being quite sure that the event came off as recorded. The same paper seems to have inherited lineal tendencies to this clairvoyant mode of anticipating what does not happen. In the *Theatrical Inquisitor* for October, 1812 (a periodical in continuation of the *Monthly Mirror*), we find the following extract, headed "Newspaper Criticism," taken from the pages of the identical journal's predecessor.

"Oct. 3d.—We were supremely gratified on Tuesday evening, at Covent Garden Theatre, during the representation of the opera of the "Cabinet," to hear that Mr. Sinclair had attended to our critical advice, and that his adoption of it was eminently serviceable to his professional character. In executing the *polacca*, he very prudently abstained from any wild flourishes, but kept strictly to the law of melody, by which he gained upon the public ear so strongly, and so deservedly, that he was encored three times, by the unanimous desire of the whole audience ; and we trust, after so decided a victory upon the part of true melody over the vagaries of science, that he will never more be fantastical. Unadulterated nature is modest and simple, and, like the pure beauty, is ever most efficient in attraction when she is unbedizened by the frippery of art. A meretricious female resorts to finery in the hope of acquiring a substitute for the lost loveliness of virtue ; but the most cunning labour of her toilette is not propitious to the aims of her desire."

On this foggy jargon the *Inquisitor* comments thus :—

"To this exquisitely-laboured piece of criticism there is but one solitary objection,—the opera of the 'Cabinet' was indeed underlined at the bottom of the Monday play-bills, for the following night ; but in those of Tuesday it was changed to the 'English Fleet,' which

was accordingly represented on the Tuesday evening—that very evening on which the reporter of the veracious journal to which we allude heard Mr. Sinclair thrice encored in the *polacca*. This is exercising the power of second sight with a vengeance; but we suspect that most of our readers may be, like the governor of Tilbury Fort in the ‘Critic,’ very little disposed to admit the possibility of seeing things that are invisible:—

‘The Spanish fleet thou can’st not see, because
It is not yet in sight.’”

When Bouffé was last in London, in 1851, it so happened that the writer of these pages had never seen him. Watching the announcement of one of his most popular characters, he repaired to the St. James’s theatre, full of expectation. But the great luminary was suffering a temporary eclipse, and unable to shine. Instead of flourishing on the boards, he lay writhing in bed, under the gentle discipline of two physicians. There was a total change of performance, but, of course, no Bouffé. The next day, a paper of extensive circulation stated that he had appeared on the previous evening with unwonted brilliancy, and had sent the audience home in a state of rapturous delight. Particular points were noticed with particular praise. The reader was sorely puzzled, and began to doubt if he had been there; long habit having induced him to place implicit reliance on anything he saw in such responsible columns. “Can such things be?” thought he, “and am I only a myth, a fabulous existence, an embodied chimera, a sort of physical dream?” He was fast lapsing into Pyrrhonism; and felt himself in much the same predicament in which he once saw the late heroic Marquis of Anglesea at his own table, who, during a conversation

on the battle of Waterloo, became so bewildered by the inventions and details of a gasconading amateur, who had not been present in that great field, that he looked down on the cork substitute which supplied the place of the leg he had left there, and rubbed it several times, to be convinced that he was really himself, and not a surreptitious double. More than twenty years before the demise of the late Duke of Cumberland, afterwards King of Hanover, a Bath paper announced his death officially, with a black border and several minute particulars.

Not many months since, a daily paper animadverted most harshly on the singing of an eminent tenor in Haydn's "Creation," at Exeter Hall. He had been announced, but was absent from severe indisposition. Shortly after, a ludicrous incident occurred at Cheltenham. A black man, patronised by a physician of that fashionable resort, undertook to deliver a lecture on the social condition of his class. The room was filled, and the audience expectant, but the lecturer was found to be "Bacchi plenus," as Dr. Pangloss says, and unfit to appear. The money was returned, with the best apology that could be made; but nevertheless, on the following morning, a detailed account of the lecture appeared in a well-circulated paper, which must have considerably astonished any of its readers who had formed a portion of the disappointed assembly.

When newspapers are thus committed, through the carelessness of their subordinates, if the mistake inclines to the side of panegyric, it may be passed over with a smile, although injurious to the credit of the journal in question, and tending to lower the character of criticism in general; but when an opposite course is adopted, when certain individuals are selected for specific censure, and slashed right and left with a

mortal tomahawk, the matter becomes too serious for pleasantry, and gives rise to painful reflections.

As a general rule, criticism which inclines to extreme censure rather than to praise, attracts by far the greater share of attention. There is more nerve and more excitement in vituperation than in eulogy. Few like to confess the fact, but there is a latent pleasure in seeing a hole picked in your neighbour's coat, especially if you have any suspicion that the said neighbour sets up for a better or a wiser man than yourself. No one brooks assumed superiority with complaisance, and it is meat and drink to find our betters assailed with ourselves. A tale of scandal is propagated much more quickly than a deed of benevolence. Unpleasant tidings travel fast, and an ill-natured article in a newspaper or magazine is sure to be communicated by some anxious friend whose optics are less on the alert to discover a panegyric. Writers write with a view to being read, consequently they study the prevailing taste, while the actual merits of the subject under discussion may chance to be a secondary point in their consideration; as in selection for public office, fitness or capability are usually the last recommendations which influence the bestowing patron.

Amongst other peculiar features of dramatic criticism, may be remarked a vice of recent growth,—the affectation of interlarding foreign words and idioms to such an extent that the whole composition becomes an ill-assorted hybrid, neither French nor English, but an unnatural jumble of both, in the midst of which the honest vernacular loses all sense of identity, and wonders at its own transformation, and how it has got mixed up in such a fantastical masquerade. Acting a part is now called *interpreting a rôle*; songs are not sung, but *rendered*; a play is no longer simply got up, but *mounted*; the dresses and decorations are mystified

into the *mise en scène*, and the whole affair is called the *ensemble*. But these are transparent obscurities compared with the *idiosyncratics*, *æsthetics*, *syncretics*, *synthetics*, *architectonics*, *esoterics*, *idealisms*, *transcendentalisms*, and a legion of other incomprehensible *modernisms*, which, as Junius says of Sir William Draper's figures of speech, "dance through" some of these articles "in all the mazes of metaphorical confusion." A recent author talks of an *æsthetical tea*, at which he assisted in Dresden. We have heard of a dancing and dining tea in London (*Thé dansante*, or *dînante*), and either of these has a strange sound; but an *æsthetical tea* is quite appalling. These hard compounds, so frequently and unmercifully dragged in, remind us of the poet's lines,—

"The words themselves are neither rich nor rare,
The wonder 's how the devil they got there."

The abuse complained of is not confined to dramatic critics, but is, we are sorry to observe, gaining ground with writers in general;—a sad act of injustice to the native, vigorous Saxon, which is thus pushed from its legitimate position to make way for imported intruders with very inferior pretensions. At the present rate, we shall soon cease to have a national tongue. English will disappear into French, and our standard authors of fifty years' antiquity will require the help of a glossary, and be classed, with Greek and Latin, amongst the dead languages.

There seems to have been always a conventional style exclusively appropriated to criticism. Sterne, more than eighty years ago, gives an amusing imitation of the mode in his day, winding up thus:—"Grant me patience! Of all the cantings which are canted in this canting world, though the cant of hypocrisy may be the worst, the cant of criticism is the most tormenting."

Excellent rules are laid down by approved authorities for acquiring this difficult art. Those who wish to study it soundly cannot do better than apply themselves to Pope's Essay, or to a very elaborate treatise by Dryden, called the "Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy," prefixed to his alteration of Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida," and to be found in the collected edition of his works. There is no occasion to travel back to Aristotle or Quintilian. Others, who may desire to be ingeniously wrong, or simply scurrilous, will find tolerable guides in the pages of Rymer, Gildon, or Dennis, and some recent followers of that school. Goldsmith says that, as regards painting, criticism lies in a very small compass; "all consists in saying the picture would have been better if the painter had taken more pains, and in praising the works of Pietro Perugino." A well-known authority of our own days built his reputation on never committing himself by a decision. He was a patient listener (rare and inestimable gift!), and when his judgment was appealed to, answered, after much deliberation, and with the solemnity of a bench of bishops, "There's a great deal to be said on both sides."

Menage has proposed an easy general rule. One day the Cardinal de Retz requested that he would oblige him with a few lectures on poetry, "for," said he, "such quantities of verses are brought to me, that I ought at least to appear to be somewhat of a judge." "It would," replied Menage, "be difficult to give your eminence many rudiments of criticism without taking up too much of your time; but I would advise you, as a practice, to look over the first page or two, and then exclaim, 'Sad stuff! wretched poetaster! miserable verses!' and, ninety-nine times in a hundred, you may be sure you are right."

Edmund Kean was a great favourite with Mrs. Garrick, the widow of his celebrated predecessor. It was usual with the Drury Lane committee, when they wanted a new-comer to make a hit, to bring the venerable old lady out to her private box, and then to prompt her to say that he reminded her of David. She said so, and the saying went the round of the papers accordingly. In the case of Kean she spoke honestly. He *did* remind her of her husband, and was nearer to him by many degrees than any actor she had seen since his death, although both agreed that he could not play *Abel Drugger*.*

Mrs. Garrick frequently visited at Kean's house, in Clarges Street; and one day, making a morning call, she found the tragedian in the drawing-room in a state of unusual excitement. He received his guest rather abruptly, and retired. The old lady's eyes followed him with some astonishment, and turning to Mrs. Kean she said, in her broken English, "What is the matter with your husband? he seems disturbed." "Oh," replied Mrs. Kean, "you mustn't mind him; he has just read a spiteful notice of his *Othello* in one of the newspapers, which has terribly vexed him." "But why should he mind that?" said Mrs. Garrick; "he is above the papers, and can afford to be abused." "Yes," observed Mrs. Kean; "but he says the article is so well written: but for that, he wouldn't care for the abuse." "Then, my dear Mrs. Kean, he should do as David did, and he would be spared this annoyance." "What's that?" exclaimed the anxious wife, with in-

* Kean essayed *Abel Drugger* for his first benefit on the 24th of May, 1814, which drew the following laconic note from Mrs. Garrick:—"Dear Sir,—You cannot play *Abel Drugger*.—Yours, Eva Garrick." He replied:—"Dear Madam,—I know it.—Yours, Edmund Kean." But he balanced this inferiority by discovering that David was unable to sing, while he warbled melodiously.

tense eagerness. "Write the articles himself: David always did so."

Assuredly David was a good general, and never exercised his tactics with more skill than in adopting this sound conservative practice.* Those were really the "palmy days of the drama," when journals paid for the advertisements, and shopkeepers for exhibiting the bills. These are well-authenticated facts. In Andrews' "History of British Journalism," published by Bentley, 1858, we find the following paragraph (vol. i. p. 192) with reference to the *Public Advertiser* and the expenses of that paper for one year, as copied from the ledger of Henry Woodfall:—

"The theatres are a great expense to the papers. Amongst the items of payment are—playhouses 100*l.*; Drury Lane advertisements, 64*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.*; Covent Garden, ditto, 66*l.* 11*s.* The papers paid 200*l.* a-year to each theatre for the accounts of new plays, and would reward the messenger with a shilling or half-a-crown who brought them the first copy of a play-bill."

More than once, in conversation with the writer of these volumes, Edmund Kean, when he had been vexed by recent criticisms, complained that the newspapers made sad mistakes as to his conceptions of character, readings, points, and other peculiarities of acting. "These people," said he, "don't understand their business. They give me credit where I make no effort to deserve praise, and pass over passages on which I have bestowed the utmost care and attention.† They think because my style is new, and

* Garrick was a shareholder in the *Public Advertiser*. It must be remembered that the newspapers in his time were few in number, while at present their name is legion.

† It was his practice to rehearse scene by scene to his wife, and to repeat a speech twenty times, until both were satisfied that he had hit the true vein.

appears natural, that I never study; and talk about the sudden impulse of genius. With genuine artists there is no such thing as impulsive acting; all is arranged beforehand; else, why should we rehearse? We may act better or worse on a particular night, from particular circumstances, but the conception is the same. I have done all these things a thousand times in country theatres, and perhaps better, before I was recognised as a great actor, and have been loudly applauded; but the sound in those days never reached as far as London."

In 1807 a small volume was published by Leigh Hunt, entitled "Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres," being a *rifacimento* or enlarged edition of a course of theatrical articles which originally appeared in a weekly paper called *The News*. Many of these are ably written, and the work may be referred to as a fair specimen of this class of composition. Hazlitt's notices, supplied when he was connected with more than one paper, have also re-appeared in a separate volume, which has gone through several editions, under the title of "A View of the English Stage," and have acquired a standard reputation; but they are inferior to Hunt's, both in judgment and impartiality. They abound in smart severities, and epigrammatic *ad captandum* turns; yet the book is valuable as a stage record, as it contains accounts of the first appearances of Miss O'Neill, Miss Foote, Miss Stephens, Kean, and Macready; and also of the last performances of Mrs. Siddons, John Kemble, and John Bannister. In Hazlitt's pages will be found a much greater amount of prejudice than candour, and infinitely more gall than honey. He undervalues Miss O'Neill, billingsgates Conway, absolutely libels Young, and deifies the two or three fortunate exceptions who find favour in his eyes. A few

extracts will corroborate this statement more convincingly than a simple assertion:—

“The best thing we remember in Coleridge’s tragedy of ‘Remorse,’ and which gave the greatest satisfaction to the audience, was that part in which Mr. D—— was precipitated into a deep pit, from which, by the elaborate description bestowed on it by the poet, it was plainly ‘impossible he should ever rise again.’ If Mr. W—— is to be puffed up, and stuck at the head of his profession at this unmerciful rate, it would almost induce us to wish Mr. Coleridge would write another tragedy, to dispose of him in the same way as his predecessor.”

Speaking of one of the most elegant and classical actors of the day, recognised by the public as such, he says:—

“Mr. Young ought never to condescend to play comedy, nor aspire to play tragedy. Sentimental pantomime is his *forte*.”

“Mr. Young is brought forward as a downright common madman, just broken loose from a mad-house at Richmond, and is going to dash out the brains of his daughter and her infant with a club. The infant is no other than a large wooden doll. It fell on the floor the other evening without receiving any hurt, at which the audience laughed.”

“As to Mr. Young’s *Iago*, we never saw a gentleman acted finer.”

“Mr. Young’s *Prospero* was good for nothing, and consequently was indescribably bad. Mr. Emery had nothing of *Caliban* but his gaberdine, which did not become him.”

“Mr. C. Kemble seemed to be rehearsing *Don Felix* with an eye to *Macduff*, or some face-making character.”

"Mr. Incedon both speaks and sings as if he had a lozenge or a slice of marmalade in his mouth. If he would go to America, and leave his voice behind him, it would be a great benefit—to the parent country."

"Mrs. Dickens never appeared to us anything but an ordinary musical instrument, and at present she is very much out of tune."

"Mr. Jones acts as if he was moved by wires. He is a very lively automaton."

"Mr. Jones is no favourite of ours. He is always the same Mr. Jones, who shows his teeth, and rolls his eyes, and looks like 'a jackdaw just caught in a snare.' "

"Mr. Terry, as *Sir Oliver Surface*, wore a great coat with yellow buttons; Mr. Farley, in *Trip*, had a large bouquet; and why should we refuse to do justice to Mr. Claremont, who was dressed in black?"

"Mr. Conway topped the part of *Comus* with his usual felicity, and seemed almost as if the genius of a may-pole had inspired a human form. He is said to make a very handsome *Comus*; so he would make a very handsome *Caliban*, and the common sense of the transformation would be the same."

"Of Mr. Conway's *Romeo* we cannot speak with patience. He bestrides the stage like a Colossus, throws his arms into the air like the sails of a windmill, and his motion is as unwieldy as that of a young elephant. Query: Why does he not marry?"

Now all these flippant, sarcastic nothings are very easily written, very well calculated to lacerate sensitive feelings, and admirably disposed to amuse a breakfast table, or to elicit exclamations of "How good!" "Capital!" "Deuced keen!" &c.; but we ask any unprejudiced reader, are they criticism?

Perhaps the best sentence in Hazlitt's book is this:—

“Mr. Kemble has been compared lately (in the *Times*) to the ruins of a magnificent temple, in which the divinity still resides. This is not the case. The temple is unimpaired, but the divinity is sometimes from home.”

One of the most apt remarks, in this line of notice, that we recollect, was made by a critic in a London paper (not Hazlitt) on a new *Richard the Third*, who was too good to be hissed and not good enough to be applauded. The writer said, “We never until now thoroughly understood honest Dogberry’s meaning when he uses the phrase, ‘most tolerable, and not to be endured.’”

All public characters, in every grade of life, are lawfully open to public animadversion, from the sovereign on the throne and the prime minister, down to the lowest subordinate on the stage, who says “The coach is at the door,” or “The dinner is served.” “’Tis the rough brake that virtue must go through,” and should be endured by great and small with becoming philosophy. Any thin-skinned patient who writhes under this discipline should get rid as soon as possible, and how he may, of the outer cuticle with which his natural construction has invested him, and encase himself in the hide of a rhinoceros. It is certainly not pleasant to think that the professional reputation which it has taken a quarter of a century to establish may be damaged, if not “snuffed out by an article,” and possibly an incompetent or prejudiced one, written hastily, in a quarter of an hour. But the sufferer must console himself by reflecting that mighty names have, ere now, been extinguished by trifling agencies. King Pyrrhus, who shook Rome to her centre, was slain by an old woman who threw a tile on his head from a garret window; Abyssinian Bruce fell down-stairs while hastening to hand an aged lady

into her carriage, pitched on his head, and never spoke again ; Lord Anson, who sailed round the world, caught his death by tumbling into a brook ; and the great Duke of Marlborough died of sixpence.*

* He walked home from the Rooms at Bath, on a rainy night, rather than pay sixpence for a chair, got wet, and thus laid the foundation of the disease which killed him. To make the story more characteristic, it was said that he borrowed the sixpence from Lord Chesterfield, and never repaid it.

CHAPTER III.

THE NAME OF KEAN IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE DRAMA—REPUTED GENEALOGY OF EDMUND KEAN—POSITION OF THE FAMILY DURING THE INFANCY OF CHARLES KEAN—FIRST ENGAGEMENT OF EDMUND KEAN IN LONDON—HIS DEBÛT IN SHYLOCK AT DRURY LANE—TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS—GREAT INFLUENCE OF THE NEWSPAPERS—MR. WHITBREAD'S SPEECH ON THE CLOSE OF THE SEASON.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY was wont to say that the old ballad of "Chevy Chase" had that in it which stirred the soul like the effect of a trumpet. So has the name of KEAN a thrilling sound in association with the annals of the stage. The brilliant career of Edmund Kean, the father, dazzling and eccentric as that of a comet, with its melancholy close, are still vivid in the remembrance of his contemporaries, and by them as vividly conveyed to the present generation. Two years after his decease (in 1835), memoirs of his life, in two volumes, were published by Moxon, without the author's name, but generally reputed to be from the pen of Barry Cornwall. The materials with which he was supplied were authentic; the facts are correctly stated, and may be fully depended on. The book is agreeably written, and compression that, as a whole, it is meagre and hurried, especially towards the close. It has more the appearance of being undertaken as an imposed task, than as a voluntary labour of love. The general tone is little calculated to elevate the profession of which it treats, or to raise the genius of the individual subject above the

failings by which that rare endowment was clouded and prematurely destroyed. History and biography require truth; but truth does not, of necessity, demand that the defective features of any given portrait should be thrust with undue prominence into the foreground. Frailties and weakness ought not to be entirely blotted out from a genuine record; neither should they be coloured up into ludicrous exaggeration. The point of difficulty lies in the discrimination with which such delicate matters are handled. Shakespeare says, with amiable and just philosophy, "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues."* It is a common theory that, in sketching the lives of public characters, we have no right to allude to their private transactions; that the veil by which the latter are hidden should never be withdrawn. False premises, and unsound conclusion. How can we pronounce on the true merit of a medal, unless we examine the reverse side as well as the face? Lord Lyttleton, in his history of Henry II., suppressed all mention of certain traditionary incidents in the conduct of Queen Elinor, and some of the fair ornaments of her court. This omission being charged against him, he replied, with courtly gallantry, "I cannot lend myself to the perpetuation of scandal against ladies of high rank so long deceased." Oliver Cromwell, with a total absence of personal vanity, desired his painters on no account to omit the unsightly warts by which his physiognomy was defaced. If a remarkable blemish is either passed over entirely, or distorted, the identity of the picture is lost, and its reflected value, either as an example or a warning, sinks into insignificance.

* "All's Well that Ends Well," Act IV. Sc. iii.

Charles Kean, inheriting the genius and success of his father, but avoiding the fatal improvidence by which both were rendered unavailing, has, while yet within the meridian of life, placed himself at the head of a difficult profession, for which he was not trained or intended; realized a competent independence by his own exertions; established a new epoch in the history of dramatic art, and won an honourable estimation in the eyes of all who are acquainted with him. It is not given to many to achieve such multiplied advantages; nor have they been gained in the present instance without trial, persevering effort, disappointment, and vicissitude. Scenes of exciting interest have been passed through, and many difficulties met and surmounted. The history of a career so active and varied, can scarcely fail to amuse the careless, and instruct the reflecting reader.

Charles Kean is an Irishman, and a native of Waterford; the *urbs intacta*, as it is proudly designated in Hibernian annals. The same place had previously given birth to Dorothea Jordan, and Tyrone Power was born in the county. Edmund Kean, at the time of Charles's birth, formed one of the company attached to the theatre in the above-named city. Of his own parentage and ancestry little is known, and that little is involved in much uncertainty. He was not clearly informed on the subject himself, and gave contradictory accounts whenever it was introduced. A modern historian, of high repute, claims for him a noble, though a left-handed, descent from George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, one of the most honest and least trimming statesmen who lived and flourished in the trimming times of Charles II., James, and William. In the third volume of Macaulay (page 543), the following passage occurs:—"It is, perhaps, not generally known that some adventurers, who, without advantages of fortune or position, made them-

selves conspicuous by the mere force of ability, inherited the blood of Halifax. He left a natural son, Henry Carey, whose dramas once drew crowded audiences to the theatres, and some of whose gay and spirited verses still live in the memory of hundreds of thousands.* From Henry Carey descended that Edmund Kean, who, in our own time, transformed himself so marvellously into *Shylock*, *Iago*, and *Othello*."

This Henry Carey left a son, George Savile Carey, whose daughter, Ann Carey, was the reputed mother of the great tragedian, although he sometimes doubted and questioned the claim, while he supported and allowed her an annuity. It has also been said that Miss Tidswell was his mother, and the Duke of Norfolk, who succeeded to the title in 1786, his father. Being once directly asked the question by the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, one of the Drury Lane committee, his Grace replied, good-humouredly, "I am not aware of the fact; but I should be very proud of a son possessed of such talent."

Ovid, writing eighteen hundred years ago, says:—

"Nam genus et proavos et quæ non fecimus ipsi,
Vix ea nostra voco."

Birth and ancestry, and what we have not ourselves achieved, we can scarcely call our own. The sentiment contains a just rebuke to empty pride, unsustained by inborn worth; but as good blood manifests itself in the higher animals, so is it something in man, and not to be under-rated, if, as it ought and often does, it acts as an incentive to virtue, and as a rampart in support of integrity. Nevertheless, everything must have a begin-

* Henry Carey, who died by his own hand in 1743, is supposed by many to have been the author and composer of the words and melody of "God save the King;" but stronger evidence inclines in favour of Dr. John Bull, who was chamber musician to James I., and lived more than a century earlier than Carey. His monument may be seen in Hereford Cathedral.

ning; and there is more satisfaction in winning fame and fortune by personal merit than in being accidentally the "tenth transmitter" of hereditary distinction.

Mary Chambers, the mother of Charles Kean, was also a native of Waterford, closely connected with the highly respectable family of Cuffe, long settled in that part of Ireland. Miss Chambers, with a sister, had, from family embarrassments, been induced to attempt the stage as a means of livelihood, and first became acquainted with her destined husband while both were performing in the Gloucester theatre, under the management of Mr. Beverley. The future Mrs. Kean was at that time acting as an amateur, receiving no pay. After a courtship of a few months, they were married at Stroud, in Gloucestershire, in July, 1808, he being under twenty, and several years junior to his wife. At Swansea, on the 13th of September, 1809, their first child, a boy, who received the name of Howard, was born. For this elder brother, Charles has sometimes been mistaken. He died of water on the brain, at Dorchester, in November, 1813, when he had only entered on his fifth year; but even at that early age remarkable for his beauty and promise of theatrical talent, having occasionally appeared with his father in infantine characters. Kean felt deeply the loss of his eldest-born, nor was his grief of a transient nature; for months later, on the night of his great success in *Shylock*, when rejoicing with his wife over the triumph he had at last accomplished, a sad reminiscence crossed his mind, his spirits fell, and he exclaimed, in a broken tone, "Oh, that Howard was alive now!—but he is better where he is."

When Charles Kean was born, and for more than two years after, the fortunes of his parents were at the lowest possible ebb; they had barely a subsistence for the present, and were almost hopeless of the future. The father,

toiling in the endless drudgery of an itinerant life, acted every night in wretched country theatres, in play, interlude, and farce; not unfrequently *Richard the Third* and *Harlequin* on the same evening; and, during the day, endeavoured to eke out a scanty and doubtful salary of some five-and-twenty shillings per week, by giving lessons in boxing, fencing, dancing, and riding. Yet ignorance and prejudice have again and again designated the stage as "an idle avocation." Those who think so would do well to test the fact by experiment for a short period, and then reduce the value of their opinions to the most unanswerable of all solutions.

At the time of which we are now writing, none saw in Edmund Kean—the undistinguished and insignificant country actor, whose want of lofty stature was declared even by the few who perceived his ability to be an insurmountable bar—the future prop of Drury Lane, the magnet of unprecedented attraction, the embryo luminary, before whose brightness all rival influences were to turn pale. The genius was, unquestionably, there, where it had ever been, but the long anticipated and anxiously looked for opportunity had not yet arrived. It came at last. Towards the close of 1813, Kean obtained an engagement, on a trifling salary, at Drury Lane, but such was the slender state of his finances, that, when the family removed to the metropolis, they entered in the most legitimate of Thespian conveyances—a waggon.*

* At this period, the new theatre of Drury Lane had not been open more than two years under the Committee of Management, of which Mr. Whitbread was chairman; but it was already immersed in heavy liabilities, and bankruptcy seemed impending at no great distance. The company was numerous but not effective, neither were the available forces used to the best advantage. Amongst the leaders were many established favourites, including Miss Duncan, Miss Kelly, Mrs. Edwin, Miss Mellon, Mrs. Glover, Miss Smith afterwards Mrs. Bartley, Messrs. Elliston, Dowton, Munden, Rae, J. Bannister, Lovegrove, Irish Johnstone, R. Palmer, Russell, and Wallack. There was much divided talent,

Wednesday, the 26th of January, 1814, proved to be a "*dies albo lapide notata*" in the annals of the drama, and in the life of the actor who, on that evening, established a name which will never be forgotten. At length, after a sickening interval of hope deferred, with an endurance of penury and disappointment, which had nearly crushed his spirit, Edmund Kean found himself in the position for which he had so long ardently sighed. "Let me once get upon the boards of Old Drury, with the footlights before me, and I will show them what I can do." This had been his constant exclamation to his wife for years—and there he stood at last, the cherished hope of his life converted to reality. The audience were at once impressed with his appearance. As if by an intuitive impulse they felt that something out of the ordinary way was about to take place. He was hailed with the encouragement commonly accorded to a stranger, and acknowledged his reception by a bow of unusual grace. "I could scarcely draw my breath," said his friend, Dr. Drury, to him on the following day, "when you entered. But directly you took your position, and leaned upon your cane, I saw that all was right."

Before many words had been spoken, he startled the audience into their first applause by the epigrammatic point with which he replied to *Bassanio*, on the question of *Antonio's* security. A general burst of approbation followed the speech ending with these lines:—

"Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd me *dog*; and for these *courtesies*
I'll lend you thus much monies."

but as a whole, they could not stand in comparison with the great phalanx at Covent Garden. Many new candidates for public favour had been introduced, but none attained permanent reputation in the first class.

By the conclusion of his first scene, all doubts as to success had vanished. He went on winning his way, step by step, through the tremendous display of passion with *Solanio*, *Salarino*, and *Tubal* in the third act, until he made his final exit in the trial scene, accompanied by repeated peals of acclamation. Such acting had not been witnessed, and such universal applause had not for many previous years resounded through the walls of Drury. The house, at the commencement, was thin, and there was truth in the droll remark of Oxberry, who said,—“How the devil so few of them kicked up such a row was marvellous!” When Kean had finished, two or three second-rate performers volunteered their congratulations. The magnates still kept at a distance, from jealousy or disappointment. Mr. Arnold sent for him to the manager’s room, and said, rather formally, “You have exceeded our expectations, sir; the play will be repeated next Wednesday.” But the actor felt that he had conquered the public, and he knew that the opinions of the management would rapidly veer round to that point of the compass which looked in the direction of their interest. He hastened to his humble lodging with a lighter heart than he had carried with him when he went to the theatre on that decisive evening. He left home doubtful and anxious; he returned overflowing with brilliant anticipations. “Now, Mary,” said he to his wife, “you shall ride in your own carriage, and Charles shall go to Eton.” The child was roused from sleep that the promise might be sealed with a kiss.

The scene changed rapidly and effectually. Success, that potent wand of the enchanter at once established the rising tragedian on the pinnacle of fame and the high road to opulence. The doors of the rich and influential were thrown open to him; he might have chosen his own society; his praises filled the columns

of the daily papers, and his attraction replenished the long exhausted treasury of the theatre. It was, in fact, the realization of a dream, "and all went merry as a marriage bell." But this complete triumph was not achieved by the unaided force of genius. Time and opportunity will carry great talent over many obstacles; but without an assisting lever the progress may be slow, and with active opposition has sometimes been checked altogether. Those who witnessed the first performances of Edmund Kean in London, were struck at once by the originality of his conceptive power and the force of his execution. They admired with unrestrained enthusiasm, but they were limited in number. A succession of failures had blunted the edge of expectation, and the public held aloof from proffered novelty. They had been too often deceived. Soon after the commencement of the season now in progress, Stephen Kemble had actually been presented in this same part of *Shylock*. It proved, as might be expected, a palpable mistake. Then followed Huddart from Dublin, who was more unfortunate than his immediate predecessor, and the last failure only preceded the coming of Edmund Kean by a single month. The announcement of a first appearance had lost its charm; a new *Hamlet* or *Richard* produced no run on the box-book. The Drury Lane Committee, timid and short-sighted, began to doubt whether Kean's was a genuine success, and even talked of removing his name from the bills. Lord Byron, who was influential in the conclave, had clearer optics, and stepped in to prevent the contemplated suicide. His colleagues, as a body, possessed the average share of intellect by which all managing committees have ever been distinguished, up to the present year of grace inclusive. They could audit accounts according to the most pedantic formula. draw up a report as lucid as a speech from the throne or

a ministerial programme, and get into difficulties or accumulate debt with business-like perseverance; but they were bankrupt in resources and expedients down to the fractional minimum of the theatrical exchequer. The practical poet saw the value of the trump card that had turned up, and how it was likely to be thrown away by unskilful playing. "You have got a great genius amongst you," said he, "and you don't know it. But he will fall through, like many others, unless we lift him, and force the town to come and see him. There is enough in Kean to bear out any extent of panegyric, and it will not do to trust an opportunity like this to the mere routine of the ordinary chances. We must go in a body, call upon the proprietors and editors of the leading papers, ask them to attend in person and write the articles themselves."

On this occasion, the pressure from *within*, the no balance at the bankers, seconded a sound argument. The advice was followed; the great guns of all the most influential journals complied, and the result rapidly carried up to an unprecedented figure the attraction of the new candidate. Without this impetus, he might have toiled on for months, wasting his energies on empty benches, and unprofitable applause. But this expedient, so effectual with true genius, would have broken down if applied to mediocrity.

On Edmund Kean's first appearance in *Shylock*, the money paid at the doors amounted only to 164*l.* On his second night, the receipts nearly doubled, and on the 12th of February, within a fortnight after, the house literally overflowed in every quarter to witness his *Richard the Third*. After this, he performed *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Iago* alternately, and for his benefit on the 5th of May, *Luke*, in a play entitled "Riches," constructed on Massinger's "City Madam" by Sir James

Bland Burges. His original engagement was speedily cancelled, and a new one entered into more commensurate with the unprecedented attraction. The season closed on the 16th of July, by which time Kean had played sixty-eight nights, the gross receipts of which amounted to 34,642*l.* Before he came out, the average had sunk to 212*l.* per night. During his performances it amounted to 509*l.* This calculation shows that the theatre cleared by his individual services, in less than six months, upwards of 20,000*l.*

On the termination of the season, the unlooked-for novelty of a dividend of five per cent. was announced by Mr. Whitbread, the chairman, at the annual meeting of the proprietors held at the Crown and Anchor. This "agreeable surprise" was received, as might be expected, with reiterated cheers. Mr. Whitbread in the course of his speech, as reported at the time in the papers, included a warm eulogium on Kean. He said, "the extraordinary powers of this eminent actor had, as well might be imagined, drawn forth the criticisms of all theatrical amateurs and judges; and though there might be some few who did not agree with him in regarding Mr. Kean as the most shining actor that had appeared in the theatrical hemisphere for many years, yet he was happy to find that the general opinion concurred with his own in that respect. A combination of all the qualities that were essential to form a complete actor, was found to unite in one man very rarely indeed; and though objections might be set up to the figure of Mr. Kean, as objections had at all times and in all ages of the world been set up to some one or other of the qualities and proportions of every actor, yet, judging of him in all the great attributes of the art, he was one of those prodigies that occur only once or twice in a century. He had the highest respect for the talents, the erudition,

the accomplishments of Mr. Kemble, who was another of those rare instances of superior ability in the histrionic profession; and he had no desire, in speaking of Mr. Kean, to deteriorate from the merit of Mr. Kemble; but it was too much the practice of persons, in speaking of an actor, to compare him with another, and those who affected to criticize the talents of Mr. Kean most scrupulously, wished always to put him in comparison with Mr. Garrick. Of that great actor he wished to speak with the most marked respect, but who of all those who compared Kean with Garrick remembered the performances of Garrick in his twenty-fifth year? They remembered him only after long study and experience had improved and matured all the faculties of his youth; and he was ready also to pay the same compliment to Mr. Kemble, that years of application and study, with a cultivated mind and strong judgment, had acquired him the celebrity he possessed. But in judging of Mr. Kean, we must look at him as he is, not the copyist of any other, not the pupil of any school, not a mannerist, but an actor who found all his resources in nature, who delineated his passions only from the expression that the soul gives to the voice and features of a man, not from the images that have before him been represented by others upon the stage. It is from the wonderful truth, energy, and force with which he strikes out and presents to the eye this natural working of the passions of the human frame, that he excites the emotions and engages the sympathy of his spectators and auditors. It is to him that, after one hundred and thirty-five nights of continued loss and disappointment, the subscribers are indebted for the success of the season, and that the public are indebted for the high treat which they received by the variety of characters he had represented."

This was a lofty position for a man to find himself in, who not more than seven months before had been unknown, neglected, and literally "whistled down the wind to prey at fortune." The ball was at his foot, but he kicked it from him, and threw away one of the most golden opportunities ever presented to struggling and successful genius.

CHAPTER IV.

LAST PERFORMANCES OF MRS. JORDAN AT COVENT GARDEN—HER DEATH AT ST. CLOUD—MISS STEPHENS—MISS O'NEILL—HER SHORT AND BRILLIANT CAREER—RETIREMENT OF JOHN BANNISTER—HIS ADMIRATION OF KEAN—FIRST APPEARANCE OF JOHN P. HARLEY AT DRURY LANE—AND OF WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY AT COVENT GARDEN.

THE same year which gave Edmund Kean to Drury Lane witnessed the last performance of that incomparable daughter of Thalia, Mrs. Jordan, at Covent-garden. On the 1st of June, 1814, she appeared as *Lady Teazle*, and after the curtain fell on that night the London public saw her no more. There was no leave-taking, neither was it announced nor intended as a farewell. Pecuniary difficulties, not arising from any imprudence of her own, drove her from England, and prevented her return. St. Cloud, near Paris, was her haven of refuge, where she died under the assumed name of Mrs. James, on the 5th of July, 1816. Those who have never seen Mrs. Jordan, and nearly all the living generation are included in the number, would obtain but a very inadequate impression of what she was, personally, from the two portraits by De Wilde, in the collection of the Garrick Club. We have been told by one (now dead) who knew her long and intimately, and was a sound theatrical critic withal, that her face had small pretensions to beauty, and was more expressive and animated than handsome; but her figure in early life was faultless, and her voice most

exquisitely modulated. She was equally happy in the expression of pathos or humour. Her fine ladies and elegant heroines of comedy (according to this authority) lacked the grace and chastened manner of Mrs. Abington, and Miss Farren. It would, perhaps, have been better for her reputation if she had never attempted them; but in hoydens and romps, in simple rustics, in scheming chambermaids, and characters of broad, exuberant humour, not Clive or Woffington in their best days could claim the superiority. Her laugh was irresistible, and carried all before it. Some have fancied that they heard it revived in the ringing tones of Mrs. Nesbitt. Her manner was perfectly original, and her articulation so distinct, that not a sentence she uttered was ever lost; but the most insignificant passage acquired importance, and stole upon the feelings of the audience through her exquisite delivery. Her attitudes and action were so expressive of the passions she delineated, that even had she not spoken, her story would have been perfectly intelligible to the audience. Hazlitt, who, when not under the influence of prejudice, could indite a good critical analysis, thus concisely sums up her theatrical attractions:—"Her face, her tones, her manner, were irresistible; her smile had the effect of sunshine, and her laugh did one good to hear it. Her voice was eloquence itself; it seemed as if her heart was always at her mouth—she was all gaiety, openness, and good nature. She rioted in her fine animal spirits, and gave more pleasure than any other actress, because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment in herself."

The public career of Mrs. Jordan presented a series of triumphal processions, but in her private life there were some dark intervening clouds, and the close was melancholy in the extreme. We have no wish to raise the veil which shrouds these unexplained mysteries; yet it

is painful to think that a being so gifted, who had so often gladdened the hearts of admiring thousands, should die in poverty, in obscurity, and extreme mental suffering, in a strange land; and that the humble stone which stands, or stood, at the head of her remains in the churchyard at St. Cloud, should be scarcely recognizable when looked for by a sympathizing tourist. A mound was raised over the grave, shadowed by an acacia-tree, and planted at the proper season with cypresses. This was executed with taste at the time, but has since fallen into dilapidation, in the absence of a small sum of money necessary to keep it in repair. The inscription fixed her age at fifty, but she must have been older, seeing that she made her first public appearance under Ryder's management, in Dublin, in 1777, as *Phæbe*, in "As You Like It," when, if the record alluded to above be correct, she could only have been in her eleventh year, and would necessarily have been announced as a child. Boaden, in his "Memoirs," places her birth as far back as 1762, which seems likely to be correct. This would make her fifty-four when she died, and fifteen when she went on the stage. Waterford may feel proud of having been the birth-place of such a brilliant genius.

The effects which Mrs. Jordan possessed at St. Cloud were taken possession of by the officers of police, and after a certain time put up to auction. The proceeding seems to have been official, in consequence of her dying in France intestate, when it becomes the duty of the public solicitor to collect and dispose of all property belonging to persons deceased under such circumstances, for the benefit of creditors. Even her personal wardrobe was sold, amidst coarse jibes and vulgar mockery. The fact rests on the evidence of an English gentleman who was present, and purchased some trifling memorials. This sad instance supplies a new and equally mournful

application of Pope's lines, in his celebrated "Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady :"—

"What can atone, O ever-injur'd shade !
 Thy fate unpitied, and thy rites unpaid !
 No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear,
 Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd thy mournful bier.
 By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd,
 By foreign hands thy decent linens compos'd ;
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd."

It has been often said that Mrs. Jordan wrote the farce of the "Spoiled Child," which, through her admirable acting in *Little Pickle*, obtained more notoriety than it deserved. But there is stronger evidence to show that it is the production of Isaac Bickerstaff.

The loss of Mrs. Jordan to the stage was in some measure compensated for by the accession of two most accomplished performers, in very opposite lines—Miss Stephens and Miss O'Neill. The former appeared on the 23d of September, 1813 ; the latter on the 14th of August, in the year following, both at Covent Garden, which theatre thus obtained a counterpoise to the overwhelming attraction of Edmund Kean at the opposite house. In those days the great national establishments were rivals, but not enemies. They lent their performers freely to each other when required, and carried on competition on liberal principles. The two last-named ladies have long retired from public life, and are enjoying the ease and happiness of domestic privacy : the one the widow of an earl, the other of a baronet. The Countess of Essex is the third enchanting *Polly*, whose sweet voice and gentle nature elevated her into the peerage she has so long adorned. The first was Lavinia Fenton, who became no less a personage than

Duchess of Bolton; and the second, Mary Katharine Bolton, who married Lord Thurlow.

Sweet is the remembrance of our early days, when we first heard the "Stephens" warble "her native wood-notes wild," at Covent Garden, before the invasion of foreign cadenzas and interminable flourishes which have since completely superseded the charms of simple melody. Her voice still vibrates in our ears, clear and ringing as the early carol of the lark, rich and spontaneous as the strings of pearls and diamonds flowing from the lips of the damsel in the fable, when rewarded for her good-nature by the benevolent fairy.

Miss O'Neill only gladdened the hearts of her admirers for five years—a short period in which to achieve histrionic immortality. Her appearance was loveliness personified; her voice the perfection of melody; her manner graceful, impassioned, and irresistible. Inferior to Siddons in grandeur, and in depicting the more terrible and stormy passions of human nature, she excelled that great mistress of her art in tenderness and natural pathos. She had also the additional attractions of youth, beauty, and novelty. In *Lady Macbeth*, *Constance*, *Volumnia*, *Margaret of Anjou*, *Euphrasia*, and *Lady Randolph*, she fell far below her predecessor; while in *Juliet*, *Belvidera*, *Isabella*, and *Mrs. Haller*, candour must admit that she surpassed her. You trembled before Mrs. Siddons, you wept with Miss O'Neill. You were awed by the one, and subdued by the other. Adoration was the sentiment produced by the first; the second you might venture to love. Mrs. Siddons presented a being exalted above humanity, to admire and gaze upon with wonder; but whom you hesitated to approach in familiar intercourse. Miss O'Neill invited sympathy, and while she suffered with intenseness, appeared incapable of retaliation. She embodied the

gentle sacrifice of Aulis, rather than the sanguinary priestess of Taurica. We do not say that she was more natural than Mrs. Siddons, but she was more like every-day nature—more closely resembling what you expected to meet in the common intercourse of life. Some starched, mechanical old ladies, insensible to passion or feeling, whose blood had congealed with age and abstinence, or, perhaps, had never liquified, objected to her impassioned gesticulation and fervid utterance, as being, as they said, boisterous, extravagant, and bordering on indecorum. It was perceived, after her first season, that she listened too much to such frigid criticism, and tamed down her impersonations accordingly. A leading point of censure with this class of objectors, was her mode of acting the scene in which she recognizes *Biron*, in the fourth act of the “Fatal Marriage.” To us, with our young feelings as yet in their full flow, this appeared so exquisitely touching, so like reality, that we indulged in loud sobs, until frowned down and stared into their suppression.

For her own happiness, Miss O'Neill was doubtless right in quitting the profession she so eminently adorned, but her premature retirement occasioned a public lamentation, long indulged before she was forgotten. Miss O'Neill's last appearance in London occurred on the 13th of July, 1819, as *Mrs. Haller*. It was not announced as a final performance, but merely as her closing night before Christmas. She acted afterwards in Edinburgh and Dublin, and, finally, at the private theatre in Kilkenny, from whence she married Sir W. Wrixon Beecher. Her portrait, by Joseph, as the Tragic Muse, fails to convey anything like an adequate idea of her personal attributes. The best likeness is a full length, in *Juliet*, by Chalon, of which good engravings are now rarely obtained.

On the 1st of June, 1815, an actor of great and versatile powers, Jack Bannister, as he was familiarly called, made his last bow on the boards he had so long trod with universal admiration. His closing characters were *Echo*, in Kenney's comedy of the "World," revived for the occasion, and *Walter*, in the "Children in the Wood." In his farewell address to the audience, he said that his health warned him to retire (gout was his besetting malady), and that their patronage had given him the means of doing so with comfort. At the conclusion of his speech, he bowed respectfully to the house, and was led off by his brother actors, who attended for the purpose. No performer ever quitted the stage more deservedly respected or regretted. Bannister enjoyed the calm evening of his repose, and the social intercourse he so much loved, for twenty years. He died on the 7th of November, 1835, at his residence in Gower-street, being then in his seventy-sixth year. He was the last pupil of Garrick, and a scholar well worthy of the master who carefully instructed him in several leading characters.

When Bannister adopted the stage as a profession, he had only entered on his nineteenth year. His first essay was at the Haymarket, as *Dick*, in the "Apprentice," for his father's benefit, on the 27th of August, 1778. On the 15th of November following, he performed *Zaphna*, in, "Mahomet," at Drury-lane, followed in two months after, by *Dorilas*, in Aaron Hill's translation of Voltaire's "Merope," and *Achmet*, in "Barbarossa." In his next season, he restored "Hamlet" to its original form, and banished for ever the tasteless interpolations by which Garrick, not long before he resigned the managerial sceptre, had degraded Shakespeare and his own genius. Whether, in perpetrating this dramatic sin, he was moved by vanity, or by the criticisms of

Voltaire, it is difficult to say. In a letter to Sir William Young, preserved by Dibdin in his "Reminiscences," Garrick acknowledges, that his producing Hamlet "with alterations" was the most impudent thing he ever did: but he had sworn he would not leave the stage until he had rescued that noble play from all the rubbish of the fifth act. Garrick himself asserted that the alteration had been received with general applause; but there is reason to think, from less interested authority, that the public merely endured, and were glad to be relieved from it. Of the actor's two biographers, Davies is silent on the subject, and Murphy names it with unqualified censure, adding the pithy remark that, as Garrick never printed his alterations (contrary to his invariable custom in similar cases), it seems he saw his error. Boaden discovered the manuscript copy of the transformed tragedy in the library of the late John Kemble, to whom it had been presented by Mrs. Garrick, and describes it minutely in his memoir of that eminent performer.

Twenty-four years after Bannister had revived "Hamlet" at Drury Lane, he happened to fall into conversation on that event with Waldron (an enthusiastic admirer of Garrick), in the green-room at the Haymarket. "Do you know, Waldron," said he, "who first restored the scene of the grave-diggers, and played Hamlet on the occasion? It was I."

"Yes," Waldron answered, "and you ought to have known better; had Garrick been alive, he would have been justly angry with you; and I'll tell you what,—when you go to heaven, Bannister, and meet Garrick, his first expression will be, 'I am very glad to see you, Jack!—but why did you bring back the grave-diggers?'"

Strange are the mutations of an actor's career. Ten

years more rolled on after this conversation, and Bannister then found himself representing the first of these same grave-diggers, in the same theatre, when Edmund Kean personated the *Prince of Denmark*. One night, while he stood waiting to go on for this insignificant duty, he overheard an interesting discussion. A knot of ancient stage-carpenters were speaking of *Hamlet*, and each commented on his favourite performer. "You may talk of Henderson, and Kemble, and this new man," said one of them, "but Bannister's *Hamlet* for me; he was always done twenty minutes sooner than anybody else."

Honest Jack rendered full justice to the meteoric genius of Kean. Being asked what he thought of him as an actor, particularly as to his manner of playing *Richard the Third*, in comparison with the performance of the same character by Garrick, and whether he could recollect Garrick's *Richard*, he answered, "Yes; very distinctly." "For some time," he added, "I could not form a judgment, and yet was unable to account for it. I had only seen Kean from behind the scenes, so one night I seated myself rather beyond the centre of the pit, and there he appeared to me another man. You think this strange, but it is true. In this new and, as I suppose, proper station, I seemed at once to discover his merits, which grew upon my faculties, first to approbation of his powers, until I ended in surprise and admiration. Indeed, I found his conception of the character so entirely original and so excellent, that I almost forgot my old master, Davy Garrick."

On the night of Kean's first performance in *Richard*, a knot of fashionable loungers and unemployed actors were canvassing his merits in the green-room; some loud in panegyric, others qualifying their remarks with sarcasm. "This is really a wonderful man," said a

warm admirer. "Yes," replied a sceptic, "I understand that he is an admirable harlequin." "I am certain of that," retorted Bannister, who was present, "for he has jumped over all our heads."

Bannister, during his early novitiate, was considered a tragedian of great promise, but it soon began to appear that his *forte* lay in a very opposite and peculiar line. He combined the serious with the comic in a manner difficult to understand. Those who recollect his *Walter*, his *Sheva*, in the "Jew," and *Storm*, in "Ella Rosenberg," have seen him elicit smiles and tears almost at the same moment. He had a noble countenance, capable of the most varied and rapid expression, a full, sonorous, flexible voice, and a sparkling animation in his eyes that rivalled the brilliancy of those of Garrick. His power of assuming distinct characters was nearly equal to that of the English Roscius. Of this, his *Colonel Feignwell*, in the comedy of "A Bold Stroke for a Wife," may be singled out as a remarkable instance. The part contains a compound of many different ingredients, and requires for each individual assumption, an opposite cast of features, manner, utterance, and action. All these Bannister exhibited with such masterly effect, that spectators unacquainted with the comedy would be led to believe that the various individuals he represented were not performed by one, but successively personified by different persons. This happy union of ease and versatility requires executive power, even more rarely accorded than mental conception. If an actor is able to assume youth, age, love, hatred, revenge, jealousy, joyous mirth, gloomy despair, and all the passions inherent in the human composition; if he can so completely change his voice, alter his features, and, with the aid of dress, persuade an audience that he is the identical character drawn by the author;

then, indeed, the perfection of his art is attained. But to communicate all the little delicate but important touches of nature, which are the physical qualities of every man, often becomes too difficult for the most accomplished actor to portray, although his hourly intercourse with society calls forth all those feelings, which he, nevertheless, is unable to depict with equal fidelity when required to assume them on the stage. The obvious reason appears to be, that what is most natural is the most difficult to imitate; and, as Quintilian observes of eloquence, "Nothing is harder than what every one imagines to be so easy that he could have done it himself." The same remark applies to a beautiful composition which the reader often thinks he could have expressed with equal elegance. We speak not here of the inherent vanity which lurks in the corner of every heart, and which induced honest, unsophisticated Goldsmith to exclaim, in a burst of indignation, when the dancing of the Fantoccini was praised, "Why, I can jump higher than that little fellow myself!"—or of the professional jealousy of Johnson, the machinist of Drury Lane, who, when, by an unheard-of innovation, the real Chunees were introduced into a pantomime, growled out, as the animal made its entrance, "I should be sorry if I could not make a better elephant than that!" When Imlac, in "Rasselas," under the excitement of professional enthusiasm, describes a great poet, we may, without much exaggeration, apply his description to an accomplished actor. The materials requisite to constitute either are nearly the same. Before the man of learning had enumerated half of them, the Prince of Abyssinia exclaimed impatiently, "Enough, thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet." "To be a poet," said Imlac, "is indeed very difficult." "So difficult," returned the Prince,

“that I will at present hear no more of his labours. Proceed with thy narration.”

We conclude our brief notice of Bannister with an epigram addressed by an old friend, Sir George Rose, to the “Young Veteran,” when he had passed his seventieth year :

“With seventy years upon his back,
Still is my honest friend ‘Young Jack ;’
Nor spirits check’d, nor fancy slack,
But fresh as any daisy.
Though time has knock’d his stumps about,
He cannot bowl his temper out,
And all the Bannister is stout,
Although the steps be crazy.”

The mortal remains of one of the most convivial hosts that ever dispensed hospitality lie in the parish church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and are deposited in a vault close by those of his father.

In little more than three months after Bannister had taken his leave of the stage, another “Honest Jack” presented himself, to fill his place, in the person of John Pritt Harley, who appeared at Drury Lane as *Lissardo*, in the comedy of the “Wonder,” on the 10th Sept. 1815, followed on the 23d by *Dr. Pangloss*, in the “Heir-at-Law.” He soon became a general favourite, stepping with public approbation into many of the most important parts vacated by his predecessor. For forty-three years he held his ground, in the language of the old tournaments, “against all comers.” Harley followed Bannister without resembling him either in person or style. Both were original comedians, who seldom failed to come up to the full expectations of the audience. Their names were often associated in comparison, although nothing could be more unlike than the manner in which they represented the same characters. The retired veteran took a warm interest in the

recruit whom he delighted to call his theatrical son and successor, bestowing on him, from time to time, much valuable instruction and friendly advice. Amongst other tokens of regard, he gave him, during his last illness, his Garrick mourning ring, his Shakespeare jubilee medal, set in a silver box, and a handsome walking stick, formerly used at Windsor by King George III. and which had been purchased for Bannister by Mr. Randall, the jeweller.

On the 26th of September, 1816, an actor destined to fill an important place in theatrical history—William Charles Macready—made a highly successful first appearance at Covent-garden, in the character of *Orestes*, in the “Distressed Mother,” which he repeated on the following Friday. He was then only in his twenty-fourth year, but had already won extended reputation in the leading provincial theatres, although, like others who have achieved high histrionic honours, he was not intended for the stage. A classical education, at Rugby, had amply qualified him for one of the learned professions. His second London part was *Mentevole* in “Julia, or the Italian Lover,” a forgotten play by Jephson, first acted in 1787, and shelved after a few representations, in consequence of John Kemble’s severe indisposition, brought on, it was said, by his great exertions in the repulsive hero. These opening parts were injudiciously chosen. The two plays had none of the ingredients of immortality, and could scarcely confer on the actor what they possessed not in themselves. Soon after, he appeared as *Othello* and *Iago*, alternately with Young. But the ground was too much occupied during his early seasons. He had to wait for opportunities which came sparingly and not always in the most desirable forms. In Shiel’s tragedies, written expressly for Miss O’Neill, Young, C. Kemble, and himself, Mr. Macready evinced

powerful and brilliant conceptions in what are generally termed "up-hill" characters, and contributed his ample share to the success which such an unusual combination of talent would have commanded for plays of inferior pretension. But ever and anon he was condemned to waste his strength, and driven from an advancing post, in support of such unprofitable nondescripts as "Proof Presumptive," "The Conquest of Taranto," "The Castle of Paluzzi," and others, of a similar cast. Such original parts as *Gambia* in the "Slave," and *Rob Roy*, added considerably to his rising fame; but still these were of a dubious character, and left an impression on the public mind that their representative was an actor of the melodramatic class, rather than a legitimate tragedian in the highest walk. It was not until he developed his full resources as the hero of Knowles's noble drama of "Virginus" (in 1820), that he came in sight of the position to which he aspired: and even then, and long after, there were severe critics who questioned his pretensions as a great delineator of Shakespeare, with one or two admitted exceptions.

CHAPTER V.

EDMUND KEAN THE SOLE PROP OF DRURY LANE—CONTINUED SUCCESS—SIR GILES OVERREACH—KEAN'S OPINION OF TALMA IN ORESTES—ORIGINAL ANECDOTES—ENCOUNTER WITH BOOTH IN OTHELLO—DIFFERENCE OF APPLAUSE IN 1817 AND 1857—LORD BYRON'S OPINIONS ON THE ACTORS OF HIS DAY—CONWAY AND WARDE, AND THE RIVAL FACTIONS AT BATH—EXPECTATION OF KEAN AND MISS O'NEILL PLAYING TOGETHER—NOT ACCOMPLISHED.

DURING the seasons of 1815, 1816, and 1817, Edmund Kean continued to uphold the fortunes of Drury-lane by his unaided attraction. He might say with *Coriolanus*, "alone I did it," for his coadjutors were of a very doubtful quality; while at Covent-garden, a phalanx of tragic talent was arrayed against him, in the combined strength of John and Charles Kemble, Young, Macready, and Miss O'Neill. The press materially assisted Kean, but had the true fire of genius not burned brightly within him, all the laboured panegyric in the world could not have kept him up against the army of disadvantages he had to encounter at the onset. There were many old dogmatic sticklers who could not believe in a first-rate tragedian, unless he had a tall person, a stentorian voice, a solemn, conventional deportment, and a measured tone of declamation. To these, Kean was perfectly unintelligible; but, fortunately, they comprised a minority in number, although vehement in censure. This class of judges disregarded, or, perhaps, had never felt the truth of Churchill's more discriminating appreciation:—

“ Figure, I own, at first may give offence,
 And harshly strike the eye’s too curious sense :
 But when perfections of the mind break forth—
 Humour’s chaste sallies,—judgment’s solid worth !
 When the pure, gemine flame, by nature taught,
 Springs into sense, and every action’s thought,
 Before such merit, all objections fly—
 PRITCHARD’S genteel, and GARRICK six feet high.”

Others discovered that because the manner of the new actor could be reconciled to no established rules, it was a dangerous heresy, and ought to be resisted. Exactly the same was said of Garrick when he erected nature on the ruins of formality. Kean was familiar, epigrammatic, and antithetical ; he was, therefore, pronounced an actor of impulse rather than study, and his most original points were set down as happy accidents. But the great majority of the public thought differently, and crowded to see him. It could scarcely be expected that John Kemble should warmly admire, or admit the superiority of a manner so diametrically opposed to his own ; but he spoke candidly on the subject, and said : “ It must be acknowledged that Mr. Kean is terribly in earnest.” In that earnestness lay his herculean strength, and the power it enabled him to wield over the passions of his audience. The pit does not now rise, in a body, and stand for minutes on the benches, waving hats and handkerchiefs, as it often did to Edmund Kean, in the days of his early vigour. Let those also who lament the size of large theatres, remember that he produced his greatest effects with the eye, and by the muscular workings of his face ; and that Drury-lane was his arena.

In 1816, he achieved one of his greatest triumphs, in the performance of *Sir Giles Overreach*, Massinger’s Satanic hero of “ A New Way to Pay Old Debts.” The character was said to be taken from a living model, and is drawn with great strength, although coarse and repul-

sive in the extreme. Kean's performance was masterly ; but less grand than his *Othello*, because the elements of the part are not compounded of heroic materials. He repeated *Sir Giles* twenty-six times during the season, and to crowded houses. The last scene was absolutely terrific. It threw ladies in the boxes into hysterics, and gave Lord Byron himself a convulsive fit. It was on the first night of this great success, when he returned home, that the excited tragedian replied to his wife's anxious inquiry, "Well, what *did* Lord Essex think of it?" "D—n Lord Essex, the pit *rose at me*!" Either moved by professional vanity, or misled by injudicious advisers, John Kemble entered the lists with his young and vigorous rival in this tremendous part—unsuited to him in his best days, and utterly beyond his grasp in his decay. The attempt was grievous to his admirers ; the result most mortifying to himself, and disgraceful to the audience. They absolutely hissed the majestic ruin on which, when in the maturity of its classical perfection, they had gazed with wonder and delight for thirty years. So much for popular favour or consideration ! Kemble felt the insult deeply, and murmured, "It is time I should retire!" Why did he place himself in such a humiliating predicament? Whatever might be his deficiencies, he had powers and faculties which no other actor on the stage possessed. He might have trusted to these instead of throwing himself upon the charity of criticism. Had he, after long experience, become so little acquainted with the gratitude of the world as to trust to its generosity?

During the period of which we are now treating, Kean followed up his success with persevering industry, and gave but few indications of the erratic habits which afterwards became so habitual and destructive. His escapades were confined to one or two absences from

“serious accidents;” and now and then he indulged in a midnight ride on his favourite steed Shylock, which endangered his own neck, and greatly bewildered the drowsy custodians of the turnpikes. On these occasions, he and his brother equestrians rode without saddles, after the fashion of Astley’s, and made as much clatter along the high roads as if they had been rehearsing the wild chase in the air, under the impelling power of the demon huntsman.

Kean was not fortunate in original characters—valuable auxiliaries in an actor’s career, as they remove him beyond the hazard of comparisons and preconceived conclusions. His best were *Bertram*, in Maturin’s turgid tragedy; *Barabbas*, in Marlowe’s revived “Jew of Malta;” and *Brutus*, in a concoction from many preceding plays on the same subject, by Howard Payne. His strength lay in Shakespeare, and to Shakespeare he always retreated after a questionable advance on less substantial ground. In the summer of 1818, being then at the zenith of his reputation, he passed through Paris with his wife, on their return from a continental tour. Talma had seen him act in London; and in spite of a strong personal regard for John Kemble, with his own habitual predilections in favour of certain classical conventionalities, he felt and acknowledged the power of the genius which had recently established an original and opposite school. Kean was not behind him in reciprocal admiration. He had not of the small jealousies of mediocrity, but was ever ready to acknowledge merit in others, and to express the delight which he derived from the exercise of congenial talents. He always spoke of Mrs. Jordan, Cooke, and the Kembles in terms of the warmest admiration, while he carried his worship of Mrs. Siddons even beyond enthusiasm. He was also liberal to an extreme in his encouragement

of young actors who played with him during his country tours. On one occasion he was so pleased with an *Iago*, who had carefully attended to all his stage business, that he invited him home to supper; and while they were enjoying themselves with two or three other selected *convivæ*, the tragedian, suddenly addressing the tyro, said, "Fill your glass, and I'll tell you something. Here's your health. You are the best *Iago* I ever played with." *Iago* bowed, and smiled; but, being something of a wag, observed, in returning thanks, "I should value beyond measure such an unexpected compliment from so great an authority, only"—he hesitated—"Only what," interrupted *Othello* impatiently? "I can scarcely believe it, for I know seven other *Iagos* to whom you have said the same thing." "Do you?" retorted the host, thrown for a moment upon his beam ends; "then Edmund Kean is a greater humbug than I took him for."

The day after their arrival in Paris, Kean came home in a hurry to the hotel where he and his wife had taken up their quarters, and said, with great excitement, "I have secured a box for this evening, to see Talma in *Orestes*. Prepare yourself for such a treat as you have never yet enjoyed; he is the greatest actor living, and this is his finest part. They took their places, and the curtain drew up. At the end of the first act, in which *Orestes* has little or no passion to portray, Mrs. Kean expressed herself as rather disappointed both in the appearance and manner of the star of the night. "Nonsense!" replied her husband; "you don't understand what you are saying. Nothing was ever like him. John Kemble and I put together would not make half such an actor. He is unapproachable." The play went on, and still Mrs. Kean was cold in her approbation, as her spouse, irritated and disappointed at her apathy, became

more and more extravagant in his eulogies. At length, when *Hermione*, in the fourth act, abruptly names *Pyrrhus* as the enemy she expects *Orestes* to remove by assassination, the total change of expression in Talma's face, and his attitude, as the single word was pronounced, and he repeated it in utter bewilderment, compelled Mrs. Kean to burst forth in the most unqualified praise. From that moment Kean's countenance lowered, and he became silent. When the play terminated after the mad scene, Mrs. Kean loudly proclaimed her delight, declaring that she had never beheld anything to compare with Talma's acting. "Indeed!" exclaimed her husband; "I'll let you see that I can do better than that. Wait till I give them my mad scene!" As soon as he reached his hotel, he wrote to the Drury Lane Committee of Management, and requested them to prepare the "Distressed Mother" for his return, assuring them at the same time that he could do wonders with it. The play which Kean had suggested was forthwith put in rehearsal; but the frigid translation of Ambrose Philipps conveys but a faint adumbration of Racine, and the experiment disappointed the actor himself, his admirers, and the public. He had studied *Orestes* in a hurry, and forgot the text as soon as the London repetitions, which were only six in number, had subsided. Some months later, in the course of an engagement at Edinburgh, Murray, the manager, anxious for the last novelty, induced Kean to appear once more as *Orestes*. When he came to rehearsal on the day of performance, he found that all his efforts to recover the words correctly were fruitless. He retained only a general impression, with here and there a few of the most impassioned speeches. Addressing the *Pyrrhus* of the evening (the same *Iago* whom a few nights before he had so highly praised), he said to him, "Are you a cue-

hunter?" Cue-hunter, to the experienced in stage phraseology, implies a matter-of-fact actor, who cannot get on without the exact word; but the young beginner to whom the question was put, in his innocence, imagined that it meant, "Are you perfect?" to which he answered with eager acquiescence, "You may rely upon it, sir, that I am to the letter." "The devil you are?" rejoined the inquirer; "then we shall be in a precious mess to-night, for hang me if I can recollect six consecutive lines of this infernal stuff. However, we must get through it as well as we can."

The play begins with an introductory scene between *Orestes* and *Pylades*. Then follows the delivery of the embassy to *Pyrrhus*, who is seated on his throne in full council. *Orestes* has been deputed by all the sovereigns of Greece to demand the intentions of *Pyrrhus*, as to his reported marriage with the widow of *Hector*, and to insist on the surrender of the young *Astyanax*, as a hostage for his good faith. All this is detailed in a long diplomatic speech, to which *Pyrrhus* replies with fencing diplomacy of the same class. On the speech of *Orestes* what follows is based, and unless this exordium is made clearly intelligible to the audience, the whole play resolves itself into a mystery. *Pyrrhus* can neither say nor do anything, until he knows what is required of him. The speech begins with these prosaic lines, of no meaning beyond empty compliment:—

"Before I speak the message of the Greeks,
Permit me, sir, to glory in the title
Of their ambassador, since I behold
Troy's vanquisher, and great Achilles' son."

Orestes then goes on to the business of the embassy.

"Now," said Kean in the morning to the *Pyrrhus*, "I foresee that I shall stick in this speech at night, so as soon as I feel that I am breaking down, I shall wink

my off eye at you, and you can then come to the front and go on with your answer."

When night came, the first scene went off smoothly enough. With the change, *Pyrrhus* entered and ascended his throne R. H.; *Orestes* was introduced L. H., and began deliberately:—

"Before I speak the message of the Greeks" (a strong wink of the eye, repeated several times, and then, after a pause, with a quick epigrammatic turn,) "I wish to hear what you have got to say."

The house rang with applause, which gave the astonished King of Epirus time to collect himself; and as it was evident the ambassador was determined that he should speak first, he had nothing left for it but to proceed with his reply to uncommunicated proposals, and which, as far as the audience were concerned, might as well have been delivered in Chaldaic.

In the great interview with *Hermione*, in the fourth act, where *Orestes* has more to act with his face than to speak in words, Kean brought down loud acclamations. In the mad scene he threw himself body and soul into the fulness of the situation, and when at fault for the exact words, substituted lines and speeches from the more familiar frenzy of *Sir Giles Overreach*.

On the following day the papers unanimously condemned the play, but lauded the actor to the skies. The part, they said, was unworthy of the talent he threw away upon it, and the English adaptation of Racine poor and uninteresting. One critic remarked, that towards the conclusion certain passages fell upon the ear as incongruous and unclassical, but this might be owing to the clumsiness of the translation. The same writer said of *Pyrrhus*, "Mr. — looked his part well, and was splendidly dressed. This gentleman, who is new to our boards, has promise, but he was evidently

imperfect. We would suggest to him the propriety of more careful study when standing by the side of so great an actor as Mr. Kean."

Othello was unquestionably Kean's masterpiece; and his third act, the climax of that glorious piece of acting. Perhaps his very best performance during his whole career, was in this great character, on the 20th of February, 1817, when Booth was pitted against him in *Iago*. This Junius Brutus Booth, as he was called, had some slight resemblance to Kean in certain points of personal appearance, and sedulously aped him in his peculiar manner. He had made an accidental hit at Covent Garden a few days before, but left suddenly, in consequence of a misunderstanding as to salary. His unexpected success completely turned his head. He had many partisans, and was loudly applauded when he made his entrance at Drury Lane on that eventful night. During the two first acts *Iago* has the advantage. Booth stood his ground fairly at the onset, but in the third act Kean put forth all his strength, and literally strangled his opponent, who went out like the snuff of a candle, and never again appeared on the same boards. His name was announced in the bills for the 22d, but he was too ill to perform, and returned back to Covent Garden, where, after the usual tumult, explanation, and apology, he was permitted to appear to the end of the season, and gradually merged into insignificance. Yet it is lamentable to think that, while he retained ephemeral popularity, men like Young, Macready, and Charles Kemble, were doomed by the caprices of management to play, and sometimes subordinate characters, with one who had little pretension to compete with their established fame, even in an inferior capacity.

Booth quitted England somewhat hastily in or about the year 1821, to avoid the consequences of an assault upon *Il Diavolo Antonio*, a noted rope-dancer of the day. After a short sojourn in the West Indies, he betook himself to the United States, which ever afterwards became his head-quarters. There he contrived to accumulate money and reputation, in spite of many evidences of constitutional insanity, aggravated by intemperance. He died at New Orleans in 1852. Amongst other offensive absurdities, he was accustomed to besmear his mouth in the last scene of *Sir Giles Overreach* with a sponge charged with rose pink, to convey the idea that he had burst a blood-vessel. Once he played *Oronoko* with bare feet, insisting that it was absurd to put shoes on a slave. At the Circus in Philadelphia he enacted *Richard the Third* on horseback, an example which has been imitated at Astley's within the last year.

We have often asked ourselves whether Edmund Kean, if he were to appear now for the first time in London, would produce the effect and attraction which he commanded forty-five years since? We find it difficult to answer the question in the affirmative. Modern audiences are less easily worked up to strong demonstration than they were at the beginning of the present century. Yet, we venture to think, true nature, genuine passion, and genius will never fail to vindicate their superiority, let taste, caprice, or fashion incline into what channel they may. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons used to say that the unsophisticated applause of the gallery gave them more pleasure than the critical "bravos" of the pit and boxes, and was a safer criterion of excellence. Kean thought differently. Neither the very high nor the very low were in his opinion

judges of acting. "The only critics worth caring for," he said, "are doctors, lawyers, artists, and literary men." Audiences now-a-days are more numerous than ever; but they sit, for the most part, in silent admiration. A round of applause is as startling as a peal of thunder in a cloudless sky. Where is it to come from? The stalls, boxes, and even the pit, are too genteel to clap their hands; and the Olympian deities are awed into silence by their isolation, and the surrounding chill.

Lord Byron's opinion on the great actors of his day, was, that Cooke was the most natural, Kemble the most supernatural, and Kean the medium between the two; but that Mrs. Siddons transcended them all. In the preface to "*Marino Faliero*" he says (and the passage is worth transcribing): "The long complaints of the actual state of the drama" (when have there not been these complaints?) "arise from no fault of the performers. I can conceive nothing better than Kemble, Cooke, and Kean, in their very different manners, or than Elliston in *gentleman's* comedy, and in some parts of tragedy. Miss O'Neill I never saw, having made and kept a determination to see nothing which should *divide* or *disturb* my recollections of Mrs. Siddons." (Is this to be received as a compliment to Miss O'Neill?) "Siddons and Kemble are the ideal of tragic actors; I never saw anything at all resembling them in *person*. For this reason *we* shall never again see *Coriolanus* or *Macbeth*. When Kean is blamed for want of dignity, we should remember that dignity is a grace, and not an art, and not to be attained by study. In all but *supernatural* parts he is perfect; even his very defects belong, or seem to belong, to the parts themselves, and appear truer to nature. But of Kemble we may say, in reference to his acting, what the Cardinal de Retz said of the Marquis of Montrose, 'that he was the only man

he ever saw who reminded him of the heroes of Plutarch.' ”

Kean, as Lord Byron says, may have been deficient in dignity, but he was singularly graceful in his action, to which his skill in dancing and fencing materially contributed. We have seen his attitude, while leaning against the wing, listening to *Lady Anne*, in “Richard the Third,” call down loud applause from its striking elegance. Not so with poor Conway, who was so bullied by the newspapers for being tall, that he twisted himself into all sorts of incomprehensible bends to diminish the height, which many other actors would have given one of their eyes for.

Conway was a remarkably handsome man, and so popular in society, that when ladies in Bath and New-castle gave invitations to tea, they added to the cards, “Mr. Conway will be present,” as an additional inducement. Conway and Warde, when rival heroes in the Bath theatre, had each a patronizing dowager, who sat in opposite stage boxes, and led the applause for their respective protégés. The red and green factions of the circus at Constantinople, in the reign of Justinian, or the feuds of the Ursinis and Colonnas, during the middle ages, at Rome, never raged with greater intensity than the “Vereker” and “Piozzi” parties, which divided “British Baïæ” in support of their respective favourites of the buskin. When Warde was locked up in “durance vile” under a merciless creditor, he was fed daily with eleemosynary turkeys, fowls, and rounds of beef. When Conway fell sick from over-exertion, three physicians were despatched daily to his door; and no sooner was he pronounced convalescent, than turtle, venison, and pine-apples poured in to re-establish his physical man. Before this, he had also been extremely popular in Dublin. Fortune smiled on him until he appeared at

Covent Garden in 1813, as *Alexander the Great*. He played many corresponding parts with Miss O'Neill in 1814 and 1815, and though the public received him well, several of the influential journals crusaded against him, which drove him from the stage in disgust. He declined into the office of prompter at the Haymarket, went to America, and threw himself overboard on a voyage from New York to Charlestown, in a fit of insanity.

Conway was most unjustly treated. Despite the persecution of *John Bull* (the newspaper of that name, not the public), and the unmeasured invectives of Hazlitt, he was not only an amiable, inoffensive man, but a good, sensible actor.

Edmund Kean and Miss O'Neill had performed together in Dublin, but they never trod the same boards after both became famous in the English metropolis. An opportunity occurred in Nov. 1817, which excited great expectation, but the proposed arrangement fell through. Raymond, formerly stage-manager at Drury-lane, had died rather suddenly, and a benefit was announced for his widow and family. Miss O'Neill, being permitted by the management of Covent-garden, offered her services to play *Juliet*, which offer was gladly accepted. Kean had acted *Romeo*, the season before, at the request of the committee, but much against his own desire. In the banishment and death scenes, he produced some telling points, but as a whole, the performance was not one of his happy efforts, and he was glad to erase it from his list. The part, too, is theatrically inferior to *Juliet*. He declined, therefore, to match himself with Miss O'Neill on such unequal terms. It was said, that he proposed "*Macbeth*," "*Venice Preserved*," or even "*Douglas*," but none of these plays could be arranged within the required time. He was

then on the sick list, and the benefit could not be postponed beyond a certain date. The great coalition, for one night only, never took place. The performance ended in "Oroonoko," and the "Maid and Magpie," with the ordinary company and no star; but interest and sympathy produced an overflow, in spite of one of the weakest bills that could possibly be selected.



CHAPTER VI.

RETIREMENT OF JOHN KEMBLE—PUBLIC DINNER AND PRESENTATION OF A VASE—TALMA'S SPEECH—KEMBLE AS AN ACTOR—HIS BLACK-LETTER LEARNING—HIS SPLENDID LIBRARY AND REASONS FOR ITS COLLECTION—REFLECTIONS ON "BIBLIOMANIA"—PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THEIR UTILITY—KEMBLE'S ROMAN COSTUMES—TALMA'S TOGAS INTRODUCED AS MORE CLASSICAL—GARRICK'S ALTERATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE—HARD USAGE OF THE GREAT POET.

WE must retrograde a little in our chronological series to record the last appearance of John Kemble, which took place at Covent Garden on the 23rd of June, 1817. *Coriolanus* was the chosen part; and, as if he had collected all his powers for a final effort, he never played with more force or effect. The night was long remembered. He had previously bade adieu to his friends in Edinburgh, in a poetical address, written by Sir Walter Scott; but on this more momentous occasion he confined himself to a few valedictory sentences in simple prose: thinking, perhaps, with Garrick, that "the jingle of rhyme and the language of poetry" would but ill accord with the feelings of such a moment. The whole of the boxes had been taken a fortnight previously; and in order to gratify the enthusiastic admirers of Mr. Kemble, who thronged to the box-office, impatient in their demands for seats in front of the house, beyond all precedent, the ordinary music was played behind the scenes, the orchestra being set aside for persons of the first rank and literary celebrity; amongst the latter, Talma, the renowned French tragedian, was particularly conspicuous.

As the great English actor made his final exit after his concluding address, a gentleman in the pit handed to the French Roscius a white satin embroidered scarf, accompanied by a laurel wreath and a letter, desiring him to place them on the stage. His graceful compliance with this request was warmly applauded. The manager being called for, Mr. Fawcett appeared, took up the tribute, and, having stated his conjectures as to the intentions of the house, professed unqualified delight at being directed to convey it to Mr. Kemble. The letter contained a request that he would not entirely withdraw, but would consent to perform a few nights each season, as long as his health permitted. Kemble remained deaf to the flattering appeal; and thenceforward his great achievements in the art he had so eminently adorned lived only in the memory of his admirers. While feelings of mingled respect and regret were prevailing before the curtain, they were still more powerfully evinced by Mr. Kemble's professional associates behind the scenes. All contended to be foremost in their expressions of kind condolence, and were eager to obtain some trifling memorial of their long-cherished love and admiration. Mathews received from his hands the gift of his sandals, which he held aloft in triumph, and exclaimed, "Although I am proud to have his sandals, I can never hope to tread in his shoes." Miss Bristow obtained the handkerchief he had used that evening while uttering his farewell, which she playfully promised to keep with more true faith than *Desdemona* did the first gift of the Moor. On Mr. Kemble's leaving the theatre, the stage entrance was filled up by all ranks of the dramatic corps, anxious to offer a last salutation to their veteran commander; while the outside of the door was thronged by individuals of all descriptions, eager to catch a last glimpse of their tried and valued favourite.

It had long been determined to present Kemble with a vase commemorative of his great services in the cause of the drama. This intention was carried out at a public dinner, which took place at the Freemasons' Tavern, on Friday, the 27th of June, four days after the retirement, Lord Holland in the chair. Soon after the cloth was removed, and the chairman had spoken, Young rose and delivered, with remarkable energy and pathos, the celebrated "Ode" written for the occasion by the Bard of Hope, which was pronounced weak, though laboured, at the time, but has since been perpetuated as combining much poetical beauty with a just and graceful eulogium. Talma was there, and when his health was proposed, in due course, replied in a short speech, which, however, proved long enough to get him into hot water when he crossed back to his own side of the Channel. Some of the anti-English papers in Paris accused him of unnationality, of *Anglo-mania*, of time-serving duplicity, and almost of treachery, for the sentiments conveyed in the few words he had spoken. His popularity was in danger, and he felt it necessary to reply, which he did in a very gentlemanlike explanatory letter to the editor of the *Moniteur*.*

* A whimsical anecdote has been connected with John Kemble's first London engagement in 1784. He was acting in Dublin, and his reputation had reached the English metropolis. Ambassadors were sent simultaneously from Drury Lane and Covent Garden to treat with the great Kemble. But there were two brothers of that name then on the same spot. The Drury Lane envoy singled out the right man, John, and secured him for his employer. The rival diplomatist of Covent Garden came back laden with the younger brother, Stephen, who certainly proved to be a *great* Kemble; but not exactly in the sense anticipated. Although only in his twenty-sixth year, he already developed symptoms of the extreme corpulence which rapidly expanded to twenty-five stone in weight, and qualified him to be yoked in a team with Daniel Lambert. Six days only before John appeared in "Hamlet" at Drury Lane, Stephen was exhibited at Covent Garden as *Othello*, and announced as *Mr. Kemble*. This attempt on the part of the managers

John Kemble only survived his retirement for six years, and died at Lausanne in 1823, aged sixty-six. He was, undoubtedly, in tragedy a great actor, the founder of an imposing school, and the leader of many eminent followers. Sir T. Lawrence has faithfully handed him down to posterity as *Hamlet* and *Cato*. In the latter portrait, no bust of antique sculpture can exceed the classic contour of that noble head. The picture is complete, and historically correct, down to the ornament on the sandal, the shape of the lamp, and the colour of the papyrus on which the republican stoic is meditating on the lucubrations of Plato. We never witnessed Kemble's performance of this part; but his *Brutus* and *Coriolanus* are present to our recollection, as clearly impressed as if we looked on them yesterday, although a chasm of forty-two years has intervened. The first time we ever saw him was in 1816, in *King John*, on which occasion Miss O'Neill appeared as the *Lady Constance*, Charles Kemble as *Falconbridge*, and Mrs. Siddons sat in a stage-box. She applauded the young and lovely actress, who supplied her place, with marked delight, to which the audience responded in the warmest manner, although *Constance* fell by no means within the range of

to mislead the public as to the real Simon Pure by no means assisted the first candidate. He had a handsome face, a fund of jovial humour, which made him a most desirable companion; and was also a sensible elocutionist. But higher attributes were wanting for the fiery Moor, who "loved not wisely, but too well." The choice proved to be worse than injudicious. Not ten years had elapsed since many of the audience had listened with delight to the silver tones of Barry. The new-comer was coldly received. Applause came sparingly, and accompanied by an occasional titter which marred "the cunning of the scene." "*Othello*" commanded no repetitions. His representative lingered through the season, appearing in a few characters of second-rate importance, and then departed to push his fortunes elsewhere. The time had not yet arrived when a Falstaff without stuffing could be announced as an attraction. Henderson was still alive, and until he made a vacancy, the merry knight and he had become identified as Siamese twins.

parts in which Miss O'Neill approached the nearest to her illustrious predecessor.

Kemble's fortune received much injury from the burning of Covent Garden Theatre, and he died less wealthy than might have been expected. His habits, with the exception of a passion for buying scarce old books, were not expensive. His library, which contained many valuable editions, was sold by auction, with the exception of the theatrical portion, purchased entire by the Duke of Devonshire, and now at Chatsworth. He was universally reputed an accomplished scholar; but his pronunciation of many words was too arbitrary, singular, and pedantic, to justify a claim to sound erudition. For these eccentricities, he could neither adduce classical nor etymological authority, nor even the sovereign rule of custom,

"Quem penes arbitrium est, et vis, et norma loquendi."

Colman evidently had Kemble in his eye when he described Sir Edward Mortimer:—

"Edward is all deep reading and black-letter;
He shows it in his very chin. He speaks
Mere dictionary, and he pores on pages
That give plain sense the headache. 'Scarce and curious'
Are baits his learning nibbles at: his brain
Is cram'd with mouldy volumes, cramp and useless.
Like a librarian's lumber-room."

The picture is overcharged as such pictures generally are. Charles Kemble, in conversation with the writer of these pages, has more than once said that his brother delighted in collecting, exhibiting, and arranging his rare copies, but that he read them less than people supposed.

In Boaden's life of Mrs. Jordan (vol. ii. pp. 144-5, we find a curious passage which bears directly on this subject—Boaden, it must be observed, though a weak biographer, was a devoted worshipper of his idols:—

“Kemble,” he says, “had long enjoyed the reputation of being a scholar, and of being pedantic in scholarship; he was accused of playing the commentator, where it was of little moment, and of living upon points and pauses. It is astonishing what hatred was worked up against him; and amongst other absurdities, those who disliked him, gifted him with *black-letter* tendencies, which most certainly he never had. though some friend on such a presumption, gave him a MS. of Chaucer’s “Canterbury Tales,” which it was supposed had been the favourite volume of his own Hotspur, and which he read with difficulty I know, and I am confident never read throughout. The old plays of his country he collected, because Mr. Garrick had done so before him; and besides that, he thought there should be in some library at hand, every play that could by possibility be used; that if any impositions were practised, their source might be pointed out. If there was some ostentation in all this, it is surely a natural foible in any actor to possess the materials of his art. His plays cost him many thousand pounds, and were uniformly bound together in several hundred volumes of the quarto shape. We may be sure, as to Shakespeare, the god of his idolatry, he had everything that could be got for money.”

Poor Nat. Lee, who was himself as insane a Bedlamite as ever raved in poetry, has said,—

“Surely there is a pleasure in being mad,
Which none but madmen know.”

The frenzy of book-collecting has also a peculiar charm intelligible only to the collector. Of all the passions to which the human mind can surrender itself, there is none more absorbing than the “Bibliomania.” Let those speak honestly who have indulged in it. It is a species of *bulimia*—an insatiable appetite, which

grows by what it feeds on. The writer has purchased his experience in this matter rather dearly, having at one period of his life occupied much time, and laid out more money than he likes to think of, in collecting a library. Books formed his chief solace and amusement during many years of an active life. Circumstances induced him to part with them, and taught the owner practically the vast distinction between buying and selling. It was something to see placarded in imposing type, "Catalogue of the valuable and select library of a gentleman, containing many rare and curious editions." But, alas! the sum produced was scarcely a third of the intrinsic value, and less than half of the original cost. There have been instances—but they are "few and far between"—when libraries have been sold at a premium. Take, for an example, the collection of Dr. Farmer, of Emanuel College, Cambridge,—he who wrote so learnedly of Shakespeare's want of learning; and whose "unanswerable" Essay has been repeatedly answered and refuted. This library, singularly rich in Shakespearean authorities, and black-letter lore, produced above 2,200*l.*, and was supposed to have cost the author not more than 500*l.* Many works are presents: when you get the character of a collector, a stray gift often drops in, and scarce volumes find their way to your shelves, which the quondam owners, uninitiated in the bibliomania, know not the worth of. An excellent and perfect copy of the quarto "Hamlet," of 1611, was not long since purchased from an innocent bibliopolist for five shillings. The conscience of the buyer smote him, but the temptation was irresistible. This small, dingy volume, originally published at sixpence, has sold for 12*l.* The best copy in existence of the Caxtonian edition of Gower's "De Confessione Amantis," fol. 1483, one of the rarest amongst printed books, was purchased by a Dublin

bookseller, at Cork (in 1832), with a lot of old rubbish, for a mere trifle, and was sold afterwards for more than 300*l*. It is now in the celebrated Spencer Library, at Althorp.

Books in all ages have brought fabulous prices. St. Jerome says, he ruined himself by buying a copy of the works of Origen. A large estate was given for a Treatise on Cosmography, by King Alfred, in 872. Two hundred sheep, and five quarters of wheat, have been exchanged for a single Homily, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In our own times, an Illustrated copy of Macklin's Bible has produced five hundred guineas. A yet more superb copy is actually insured in a London office at 3,000*l*. The "Decameron," of 1471, was bought at the Duke of Roxburgh's sale in 1812, by the Duke of Marlborough, for 2,260*l*.

What time does book-collecting occupy! What anxiety it excites! What money it requires! What evil passions it sets in motion! It makes man exclusively selfish, and withers up Christian charity. As Burns says, of another, and more unholy indulgence—

"It hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling."

Under the influence of this insanity, we live in a perpetual breach of the tenth commandment, coveting our neighbours' goods, and anticipating the hour of his departure, when we may compete for his "Valdarfer Boccaccio," his unique "Game and Play of the Chesse," printed by Caxton in 1474, or his first folio Shakespeare, with genuine title-page and portrait.

The great use of books is to read them. The mere accumulation is an empty fantasy. Your thoroughbred collector seldom reads anything but catalogues, after the mania has fully possessed him, or such biblio-

graphical works as facilitate his purchases. Antonio Magliabechi is an exception, and cannot be quoted as a type of the species. If you are too poor to buy, and desire to read, there are public collections in abundance to which access may be obtained. There is a circulating library in every village, and there are plenty of private ones undisturbed by their owners. Subscribe or borrow; don't *steal*!—a common practice enough, and not without authority.* If your friends are churlish, and hesitate to lend; if your pockets are empty, and you have no cash even to subscribe, still you *can think*—you may try to remember what you *have* read, and live on your recollections of past enjoyment, as the *Wife of Bath* does in old Chaucer's tale. You'll save your eyes too, and, when you get on the shady side of life, you will find that point worthy of attention.

After all, what do we collect for? At most, a few years' doubtful possession of what we can very well do without. When Sir Walter Raleigh was on his way to execution, he asked for a cup of ale, and observed, as he quaffed it, "That is good drink, if a man could only stay by it." So are rare and curious libraries good things, if we could stay by them; but we cannot. When the time comes, we must go, and then our books, and pictures, and prints, and furniture, and china, go too; and are knocked down by the smirking callous auctioneer, with as little remorse as a butcher knocks a bullock on the head, or a poulterer wrings round the neck of a pullet, or a surgeon excises your arm out of the socket, chuckling at his own skill, whilst you are writhing in unspeakable agony.

Reader, once more, don't collect books, and envy not the possessors of costly libraries. Read and recollect,

* "This borrow, *steal*,—don't buy."

Vide "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage."

how and when you can. Of course you have a Bible and Prayer-book. Add to these the "Pilgrim's Progress," Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Byron if you like, a History of England, Greece, and Rome, Boswell's "Life of Johnson," and Napier's "Peninsular War." A moderate sum will give you these: and you possess a cabinet encyclopædia of religious, moral, historical, miscellaneous, and entertaining knowledge, containing more than you want for practical purposes, and quite as much as your brains can easily carry. Never mind the old classics. They may abound in wisdom and philosophy, but they are intolerably slow. Leave them to college libraries, where they look respectable, and enjoy long slumbers. The monthly periodicals and leading papers will place you much more *au courant* with the conversation and popular acquirements of the day. Should you happen to be in business of any kind, add, if you can, to the books we have named, a *Ledger*, with a good sound balance on the right side, and you will be a happier and perhaps a better read man, than though you were uncontrolled master of the Bodleian, the Imperial Library of France and the innumerable tomes of the Vatican into the bargain.

Don't collect books, I tell you again emphatically. Collect wisdom: collect experience: above all, collect *money*: not as our friend Horace recommends, "*quo cunque modo*," but by honest hard-working industry alone. And, when you have done this, remember who gave you the advice, and be grateful.

What is said here applies to private collecting only. Far be it from the writer to discourage great public libraries, which, under proper arrangements, are great national benefits, useful to society, and invaluable to literature. But, as they are regulated at present, fenced round with so many restrictions, and accessible chiefly

to privileged dignitaries, or well-paid officials who seldom trouble them, they are little better than close boroughs with a very narrow constituency. Let it be remembered, however, on the other side, that the public misuse their indulgences, and are little to be trusted. Not one in twenty either knows or cares how to handle a book, not his own property, with becoming delicacy. It is easier to nurse a child.—But we have galloped away into a long and unpardonable digression, from which we must dismount, and resume our subject.

Kemble's widow, who was much younger than himself, and by whom he had no children, survived him for many years.* Like Garrick, he married for happiness rather than ambition, and made a most fortunate choice. Many stories have been told of the immediate cause and manner of his courtship: how he received a large sum from a noble lord whose daughter had fallen in love with him, on condition that he married within a given time; how he proposed to Mrs. Brereton, giving her a fortnight to deliberate: and how she considered that delays might be dangerous, and accepted him at once. Some of these, including his alleged absence of mind as to the important change of condition on his wedding-day, are humorous exaggerations, and others have been repeated *ad nauseam*.

It would be impossible to conceive anything finer than Kemble's appearance in the Roman costume, as introduced by himself. When he revived "Coriolanus" and "Julius Cæsar" at Covent Garden, his togas, then for the first time exhibited on the English stage, became the theme of universal admiration. They were pronounced faultless, minutely classical, even to the long-disputed *latus clarus*, severely correct, and beautifully

* She had been previously married to Brereton, an actor in the Drury Lane company, who died insane, in 1787.

graceful beyond precedent. But when the peace brought France and England together, and the treasures of the Louvre presented all the authorities under one glance which had been so long shut out from British eyes, it was found that Talma's senatorial robes were much nearer the truth. Whereupon they were, in due course, transplanted to the London boards, and the Kemble garments were deposed. Charles Young, the affectionate disciple of Kemble, was the first who adopted the new mode, which he studied under the restorer; and Charles Kemble himself, when attiring for *Marc Antony*, was wont to repair to Young's dressing-room before presenting himself on the stage, to be inspected, and assured that the folds of his toga were perfectly arranged according to the Talma model.

Kemble obtained great credit with the audiences of the day for his Shakespearean revivals; yet they cannot stand comparison for a moment, either in accuracy of text, costume, architectural details, or mechanical appliances, with the magnificent series we have all witnessed during Mr. Charles Kean's period of management at the Princess's Theatre. Of this, we shall speak more at large in the proper place. Half a century ago, the public were not ripe for the knowledge which they now imperatively demand, and the instructor himself was *unoculus inter cæcos*—the one-eyed teaching the blind. With all our traditional admiration of Garrick as an actor, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that he committed heavy sins against Shakespeare in the exercise of his managerial power, and the indulgence of his literary ambition. He never could forego the temptation of a clap-trap, and sacrificed consistency to what he considered effect without scruple or remorse. He literally pandered to, instead of attempting to amend or exalt, the vitiated tendencies of the million; his

“alterations,” as he called them, were singularly audacious ; and not less so was his prologue to one of the most objectionable (the “Winter’s Tale”), which he winds up by saying,—

“ ’Tis my chief wish, my joy, my only plan,
To lose no drop of that immortal man.”

And with these jingling lines, he introduces a noble drama, unmercifully cut down from five acts to three, and in which dull platitudes are substituted for the original inspiration. There was justice in the severity with which Theophilus Cibber reflected on Garrick in a dissertation delivered at the Haymarket in 1756. He says, “Were Shakespeare’s ghost to rise, would he not pour indignation on this mender of poetry which wants no repairs, who thus mangles, mutilates, and transforms his plays? The ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream’ has been minced and fricasseed into a thing called the ‘Fairies,’ the ‘Winter’s Tale’ mammoocked into a droll, and the ‘Tempest’ changed into an opera. Yet this sly prince would insinuate that all this ill-usage of the bard is owing, forsooth, to his love of him ; much such a proof of tender regard as the cobbler’s drubbing his wife.” Strange liberties were indulged in in those days, which the superiority of modern taste utterly repudiates. John Kemble was a better scholar than Garrick ; yet he sanctioned Dryden and Davenant’s monstrous interpolations in the “Tempest,” calling them Shakespeare’s, transplanting the storm to the second act, and removing *Prospero’s* celebrated speech of “the cloud-capp’d towers” from its natural position to the end, for the sake of an effective tag. He also perpetuated Tate’s mawkish absurdities in “King Lear,” with the loves of *Edgar* and *Cordelia*, and the unhappy substitution of a happy catastrophe. He retained

Garriek's weak additions to the "Winter's Tale" and "Cymbeline," his reduction of the "Taming of a Shrew" into a farce, together with Thompson's or Sheridan's last act of "Coriolanus."

It is really a matter of wonder, how a man of reputed classical mind and experienced judgment, could lend himself to such crying mistakes. Dr. Johnson observes with truth, "There is not, perhaps, any play of Shakespeare which could be represented on a modern stage as originally written." But, fortunately, his plays are very long; and after the omission of all exceptionable passages, more than sufficient materials remain for five acts. The real friends of the immortal poet are no advocates for his faults, for even his transcendent genius has its blemishes. They are only desirous of seeing him represented with no changes but such as are absolutely necessary, and feel naturally indignant when influential followers, like Garriek and Kemble, who have given their sanction to the crudities of Tate, Cibber, and Co., are yet so inconsistent as to talk of their veneration for the great original. If Shakespeare encountered John Kemble in the Elysian Fields, unless he held aloof indignantly, as the ghost of Ajax did from the still living Ulysses, he might perhaps say to him, "I thank you heartily for your performance of my *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *Brutus*, *Macbeth*, &c.—but did you never hear the good old proverb, 'Let every one stick to his trade?' Why would you tamper with the text of my plays? Why give many of my characters names which never entered my imagination? Above all, what could induce you to restore such passages of Tate, as even Garriek had rejected when he revived 'King Lear'? Saint Lawrence never suffered more torture on his gridiron than I have endured from the prompt-book."

CHAPTER VII.

KEMBLE'S PHYSICAL DEFICIENCIES—THE COMPARATIVE VALUE OF VOICE AND EYE TO AN ACTOR—TALMA'S ELOCUTION—MISTAKES IN COSTUME—KEMBLE'S PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS—HIS NOTION THAT NATURE INTENDED HIM FOR A COMEDIAN—HIS OWN ANECDOTE OF HIS PLAYING CHARLES SURFACE—ERUDITION OF PROMISCUOUS AUDIENCES—FIRST APPEARANCE OF WILLIAM FARREN—RETIREMENT OF IRISH JOHNSTONE—COMPARISON BETWEEN JOHNSTONE AND POWER—MORBID TEMPERAMENT OF COMIC ACTORS—THREATENED REVIVAL OF THE ROSCIOMANIA—MISS CLARA FISHER—YOUNG BETTY THE ROSCIUS—MISS. MUDIE—A LEGION OF ROSCH AND ROSCLÆ—INSTANCES OF PRECOCIOUS TALENT.

KEMBLE laboured under a constitutional asthma, which obliged him to husband his powers, and restrained him from daringly carrying out his own conceptions. He was ever apprehensive that his voice might fail him in an arduous part, and this sometimes imparted an appearance of languor and monotony to his best efforts. He was often compelled to check himself in the fullest tide of passion, from dread of a physical break-down. Churchill, in his encomium on Garrick, in the "Rosciad," dwells emphatically upon the advantages of the—

"Strong expression and strange powers which lie
Within the magic circle of the eye ;"

and in this criticism he is right. But even the wonders of the eye will lose much of their charm if not supported by the still more imposing organ of the voice. Of all the personal faculties which a great actor requires, the voice is that which above all others will, according to its strength or weakness, help or impede

the execution of his conceptive genius. Where nature has bestowed the power, intonation will obey, with mechanical submission, the compulsive dictate of feeling. Edmund Kean's voice was melodious in the lower notes, but defective in the higher, under the exercise of violent emotion. Young and Macready were magnificently gifted in this respect; but Talma excelled them all; his intonation was wonderful; and his voice possessed a compass and a musical cadence which fell upon the ear with the effect of many well-tuned instruments blended together—a diapason more perfect than human mechanism has ever yet invented to improve and regulate sound. Dugazon, an actor of eminence on the French stage, under Louis XVI., held a theory peculiar to himself. He used to maintain that the nose was the most complete organ of expression, and wrote an essay, with diagrams, to show that there were forty distinct modes of moving this single feature with variety of effect.

Kemble paid great attention to the minutiae of the stage, as they were understood in his day, and introduced many alterations of costume; but sometimes he fell into strange mistakes, and was so dogmatic, that he refused to rectify them on evidence. In *Hamlet* he wore an elephant suspended by a blue ribbon from his neck, and a modern star on his cloak, like that belonging to an English order of knighthood. Guthrie tells us, in his "Universal History," that the Order of the Elephant was instituted by Christiern I., of Denmark; but Christiern I. began to reign in 1448, whereas, Shakespeare has clearly fixed the time of the action of his play several centuries earlier. Besides, if it were proper for *Hamlet* to have the effeminate appendage of a badge and ribbon, *à fortiori* the King ought to be decorated after the same fashion.

In the early scenes of *Posthumus* in "Cymbeline," Kemble wore a half modern, open tunic, trimmed with spangles, a ruff, tight pantaloons, and boots of russet leather. This strange garb contrasted incongruously with the Roman togas and shirts of *Jachimo* and *Philario*; and still more so with his own military panoply, resembling that of *Coriolanus* or *Brutus*, in which he arrayed himself for the discovery in the last act.

Kemble, when playing *Hamlet*, always instructed *Guildestern* to attempt to exit before him in one of the scenes; this breach of etiquette he checked by a severe look, and then walked off with much dignity. He did something of the same kind with *Campeius*, in the second act of "Henry the Eighth;" and both these arrangements of what is called "stage-business," were greatly lauded as profound readings of the author. They might have stood for such had there been one syllable in the text to warrant them, but as no such interpretations are there to be found, they must be looked upon as stage trickery, below the practice of a great actor. In *Leon* he made no scruple of kicking *Cacafogo*, but *Cacafogo* was not allowed to give the original provocation, which utterly destroys the gist of the retort. If he had played *Stukely*, he might equally have objected to being struck by *Lewson*. When Mrs. Siddons assumed the part of the termagant *Lady Loverule*, for a benefit freak, she left out the strapping as the cobbler's wife. If performers of the first class descend, for their own advantage, to what conventional critics call inferior rôles, assuredly they ought to discharge them in their "severe integrity," or let them alone altogether.

Kemble's best parts may be considered, *Coriolanus*, *Brutus*, *Cato*, *Hamlet*, *King John*, *Wolsey*, *Jacques*, *Leontes*, *Macbeth*, *Hotspur*, *Leon*, *Zanga*, *Octavian*, *Penruddock*, the *Abbé De l'Epée*, the *Stranger*, *Rolla*, and

De Montfort. Not long before his retirement, he was for several days underlined for *Falstaff*, and wore the dress in his room to become accustomed to it. His friends wisely saved him from what must of necessity have proved a pitiable mistake. The actor who could play eighteen such characters as those we have enumerated above, better than any other living representative, might be satisfied with ranking as a rare exception which scarcely occurs once in a century. Universality of genius is given to no one. Garrick failed comparatively in *Morplot* and *Othello*.

John Kemble was convivial in his habits, fond of late hours, and given to indulge freely in post-prandial libations when his company pleased him. But he had the systematic prudence never to exceed when there was business in hand. "A man," he would say, "should get drunk occasionally: it gives nature a fillip." He was a humorist, too, after a peculiar fashion: but his jokes and his laugh were somewhat sepulchral. Even when completely under the influence of wine, he never relapsed from his habitual solemnity of manner, and stately mode of speech. When young on the stage, he fancied, under the strange hallucination by which actors are frequently possessed, that he was gifted with the attributes of gay, dashing comedy. Tate Wilkinson tells us that he selected *Plume*, *Dorincourt*, *Archer*, *Ranger*, and similar parts, to please himself, and not by the desire of either manager or public. A smile on his countenance appeared to wonder how it got there. As John Wilson Croker said in the "Familiar Epistles," it resembled the plating on a coffin. He then goes on to say—

"Young *Mirabel* by Kemble play'd,
Look'd like *Macbeth* in masquerade."

and adds, in a note, "I have had the misfortune to see this exhibition; truly it was, as Shakespeare's clowns say of their interlude of "*Pyramus and Thisbe*," 'very tragical mirth.'"

Reynolds tells an amusing anecdote, for which he quotes the authority of Kemble himself. In 1791 the great tragedian chose to act *Charles Surface*. Some time afterwards Reynolds and Kemble met at a dinner: the flattering host asserted that *Charles Surface* had been lost to the stage since the days of Smith, and added, that Kemble's performance of the part should be considered as *Charles's Restoration*. On this a less complimentary guest observed, in an under tone, that it should rather be considered as *Charles's Martyrdom*. Kemble overheard the remark, and said, with much good humour, "I will tell you a story about this, which proves that you are right. Some few months ago, having unfortunately taken what is usually called a glass too much, I inadvertently quarrelled with a gentleman in the street. On the next morning, when I came to my senses, I felt that I was in the wrong, and offered to make him any reasonable reparation. 'Sir,' interrupted the gentleman, 'at once I meet your proposal, and name one—promise me never to play *Charles Surface* again, and I shall be perfectly satisfied.' I gave the promise, and have kept it: for though Mr. Sheridan was pleased to say he liked me in the part, I certainly do not like myself." Kemble, when he told this story, had seen his error, and put the best face he could on it: but certain it is that when he first acted *Charles*, he was very desirous of having his performance lauded in the papers. Mrs. Wells has printed in her "*Memoirs*," a letter from Kemble to Captain Topham, in which he says, "I hope you will have the goodness to give orders to your people to speak favourably of the *Charles*, as

more depends on it than you can possibly be aware of." Topham, in reply, declared that he could not sacrifice the credit of his paper by puffing either Mrs. Siddons or Kemble in comedy.

Mrs. Siddons used sometimes to sing comic songs in private (we have been told that "Billy Taylor" was her favourite) with admirable effect; but on the stage she was out of her element entirely when she laid down the bowl and dagger of Melpomene. The author of "Familiar Epistles" again says, with humour that atones for the satire, "I have heard of a lady who wept plentifully throughout the whole of 'As You Like It,' when Mrs. Siddons played *Rosalind*, from an unhappy impression that it was 'Jane Shore.' I am glad to relate the anecdote that so much good tears should not go for nothing." Promiscuous audiences are capable of very rich flights in erudition. The same writer tells us that in witnessing a performance of Betty, the Young Roscius, as he was called, his neighbours in the pit began to argue as to who this Roscius could be. Some said it was one Garrick's Christian name; but the general voice decided that he was a French actor, who had been guillotined in the early days of the Revolution. We ourselves once heard a sapient critic inform an inquiring brother, that the "Merchant of Venice" was written by Sheridan, and the "School for Scandal" conjointly by Beaumont and Fletcher.

Boaden, in 1825, published a "Life of John Philip Kemble," in two volumes, 8vo. His intimacy with the subject of his biography, enabled him to give some information which few other persons could have obtained; but this information is little in quantity and less in value. Garrick and Kemble have been unfortunate in their historians, of whom it is difficult to say which has the worst.

On September 18th, 1818, William Farren made his first appearance at Covent Garden, as *Sir Peter Teazle*, followed in quick succession by *Lord Ogleby*, *Sir Bashful Constant*, and *Sir Anthony Absolute*. A loud flourish of trumpets preceded him from Dublin, where he had long been a universal favourite, and for several seasons stage-manager. He at once established himself as the legitimate successor of King, and held his ground against all rivals during a career of thirty-seven years. When he became known to the London public he was a young man, although he had long accustomed himself to play old characters.

The 28th of June, 1820, witnessed the last performance but one, in London, of Jack Johnstone, the celebrated representative of Irish characters. He took a formal leave of the stage at Liverpool, in the August following; but returned for one night, at Drury Lane, May the 18th, 1822, when he volunteered his services as *Dennis Bulgruddery*, for the benefit of his distressed countrymen.* He was then in his seventy-fifth year. Whether in or out of his stage clothes, Johnstone was a remarkably handsome man, with a bearing so innately gentleman-like that it was impossible by any external travesty to change him into a clown. But his constitutional humour made up for that strange deficiency in his rustics—a want of natural vulgarity. His acting was ease personified, without the slightest appearance of study or labour. In a military character, or a travelled Irish gentleman, he stood above all rivalry; but Tyrone Power, who filled his place within a very few years, excelled him in the line of rollicking dare-devils, which

* Edmund Kean gave up the proceeds of his Benefit on the 3d of June following, for the same benevolent purpose, and acted three parts:—*Paris*, in the “*Roman Actor*,” *Octavian*, and *Tom Tug*, in the “*Waterman*,” with all the songs.

admitted of greater breadth and depended more on physical elasticity and exuberant spirits. In their drunken men both were equally happy, and hit the difficult point of rich merriment without verging on disgust.

Irish Johnstone, as he was commonly called, was one of the pleasantest table companions that ever gladdened society. He realized a handsome fortune, and lived to see his eighty-first birth-day*—another eminent instance that the exercise of the art histrionic is in itself highly conducive to health, happiness, and longevity. Much of the true spirit of Irish fun and eccentricity, departed, and apparently “never to return,” with Johnstone and Power. Of some later representatives, the less that is said the better. Hudson and Barney Williams must, however, be quoted as praise-worthy exceptions. They are always agreeable, animated, and natural. But when we witnessed the heavy, measured, hard, mill-grinding attempts of the greater number of the so-called successors of the two great artists of whom we are now speaking, we thought of the past with redoubled regret, and a feeling very similar to what the late Daniel O’Connell meant to convey, when we once heard him say of a tiresome long-winded talker (the son of a great orator), at a public-meeting, “that young man does not remind me of his father.” Irish fun is either the best or the worst thing on the stage. It admits of no medium. The richest, the most varied, and the most exhilarating of all imaginable humour, when truthfully and tastefully depicted; but when, as Shakespeare says, “overdone, or come tardy off,” it becomes in equal proportion wearisome, vulgar, and anti-national.

The association of John Johnstone and Tyrone Power,

* He died on the 26th December, 1828, at his residence, No. 5, Tavistock Row, Bedford Square, and lies buried in a vault in St. Paul’s, Covent Garden.

which naturally presents itself here, although not in chronological keeping, suggests also an estimate of their relative pretensions. They were unquestionably the two greatest actors of Irishmen the stage has produced, within the range of surviving experience. Which of the two is entitled to take precedence of the other, or whether they stood on an equality, are questions open to endless argument and opinion. Their style and qualifications differed in essential particulars, however the general merit might be evenly balanced. We know of no other candidate to be admitted into the competition. Charles Connor, who died suddenly on the 7th October, 1826, was next on the list; but, although good, he scarcely stood beyond first in the second class. His early death made way for Power, before he had himself reached the point of excellence. Of those who preceded, we have but scanty records; and to classify the pretensions of the living would be unprofitable. The step from mediocrity to greatness is wide and impassable except to the chosen few. Moderate talent may please, but high genius alone can delight to enthusiasm.

Johnstone, although perhaps less habitually familiarized to first class society, had on the stage a more commanding air, and a more imposing personal deportment than Power possessed. Never wanting in the spirit and humour which his part required, he indulged more in repose. He flashed out occasionally and then subsided for a time. Sometimes he ambled or cantered gently along; but Power dashed away in a continual gallop. As George the Third said of Garrick, when asked to describe his peculiar manner, "he was unlike anybody else, always doing something, and always keeping the whole audience on the alert." With Johnstone the laugh was long and loud at intervals. With Power it was incessant. An occasional round shot,

as distinguished from the rattling fire of musketry. Johnstone, although rich in his clowns, was scarcely so distinctly identical as his successor. His *Dennis Bulgruddery*, *Looney Mactwolter*, *Murtoch Delany*, and *Teague*, were more nearly related than Power's *Rory O'More*, *O'Flannigan*, *Larry Hoolagan*, and *Teddy the Tiler*. Johnstone's "brogue" was purer, indigenously Milesian, and engrafted on his natural attributes. Power could assume or divest himself of his Hibernian dialect and cadence, as he pleased. But absence and a foreign education had mixed up with it some discrepancies which a practical native ear might discover, although not prominently perceptible to ordinary observation. Johnstone excelled in characters where a high-bred tone blended itself with military ease and polish, such as *Sir Lucius O'Trigger*, and *Major O'Flaherty*. We are not sure that he would not have surpassed Power in certain points of "The Irish Ambassador," *Sir Patrick O'Plenipo*, admirable as that representation proved in the hands of the actor for whom it was invented. But we question whether he possessed physical energy enough to support a whole play instead of now and then an insulated scene. With Power the point was settled beyond dispute by repeated experiment. Up to his time the Irishman in a comedy or farce had been a feature, and a highly amusing one, thrown in to relieve, rather than a central pivot, on which the entire action revolved. Johnstone brought to perfection an existing style, but Power created a new one for himself. Both studied from nature; but Power, although by much the younger man, had opened more leaves of her polyglot volume, as he had seen greater varieties of human character, in different and far-distant countries, and had led a life of superior travel and adventure. He introduced a new school of acting, founded on his own inexhaustible

energy. Authors began to write pieces for him which partook of the monodramatic class. In these he was the alpha and omega, seldom absent from the stage, while the laugh never ceased, and the audience never yawned. As the curtain fell, after three or four hours of joyous excitement, there stood Tyrone Power, fresh, smiling, and untired, as when he bounded on the stage under the first burst of acclamation which greeted his entrance. Natural spirits made his labour light, and doubled the satisfaction of the spectators, who felt that he entertained them without effort. It seems rather an odd contradiction, although a common case, that professed comic actors are often constitutional hypochondriacs—men unconscious of a joke, except those set down for them, and who never laugh out of character—bending under morbid melancholy, until relieved by brandy-and-water, or fidgetting in a state of nervous depression, not many degrees removed from lunacy. "Go and see Liston," said an eminent physician to a patient who consulted him as to the best cure for low spirits. "Alas! I am the man," replied the sufferer in a despairing tone. The story has been fathered on Liston, whom it fits appropriately enough, but we have seen it in earlier print, recorded of a celebrated French comedian, who flourished more than a century ago. Johnstone and Power were remarkable exceptions to this rule—as merry and entertaining in private as on the stage, full of rich anecdote and conversible on many topics. They taught us to believe practically in the value of a "light heart," which, according to the old song, with the accompaniment of light marching order, will carry us triumphantly through the world and all its battles.

Power realized more money, and in less time, than Johnstone; he received higher salaries and was more

individually attractive. He was fortunate, too, in a larger and more brilliant list of original characters; but this marks the extent of his popularity. Dramatic authors write for the actors who can give their works the greatest currency. Johnstone far excelled Power as a vocalist (he had appeared for several years as a singer); and was unrivalled in a *chanson-à-boire*: but Power sang pleasingly, and always introduced his songs with taste and effect, both on the stage and in private society. He sometimes supplied the words himself, and adapted them to well-known national airs which suited the compass of his voice. We are not aware that Johnstone ever meddled with authorship in any shape. Power wrote much, and distinguished himself in more than one branch of ornamental literature. Both were prudent in worldly affairs, honourable in all their dealings, and systematically gentlemanlike in their habits.* Each was the son of an officer in the army, left under the care of an indulgent mother, and intended for the military profession. Each imbibed a fondness for the stage from intimacy with two managers who gave them the *entrée* of their respective theatres in early youth—Johnstone with Ryder of Dublin, and Power with Adamson in Cardiff. Each encountered the strong opposition of parent and friends in the course he had resolved on, and each came out and persisted for years in a line contrary to that for which his attributes were especially moulded. Their ultimate success was equal, but here the parallel ceases; Johnstone lived to extreme old age, while Power was cut off in his prime. This slight comparison of two very superior men is attempted less in the character

* Johnstone was twice married. By his second wife, a Miss Bolton, he left an only daughter, to whom he bequeathed a considerable fortune. She was a lady of great beauty and accomplishments, married Mr. James Wallack, and died, we believe, in 1850.

of a critic than as a recorder of impressions uninfluenced by prejudice, and formed on personal observation. Power, as our readers will remember, was lost in the *President*, which foundered with all on board, as it is supposed, on the night of the 13th March, 1841. For a considerable time the fact was disbelieved, and such was the prevailing impression of the good fortune attached to the name of Tyrone Power, that it was still confidently expected that the missing steamer would be heard of, long after all reasonable ground for such expectation had ceased to exist. It was singular enough that Power had a prejudice against the *President*, and gave up the idea of taking his passage in her, as he intended, on her first outward voyage, saying she looked unlucky, and had a broken back.

More than eighteen years have passed over since she disappeared in that destroying tempest of March, 1841, and not even the smallest vestige of the ill-starred vessel, or aught that it contained, has been disclosed to human eye. This event stands recorded in its shroud of doubt and darkness, amongst the impressive tragedies of history, and will often be referred to, and called up in illustration—

“To point a moral, or adorn a tale.”

What Dr. Johnson, with some exaggeration of feeling, arising from the memory of long friendship, said of the decease of Garrick after his retirement, may with more strict fidelity be applied to the untimely fate of Power, in the full tide of his popularity:—“His death eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure.”

During the early part of 1818, there appeared alarming indications of a revival of the *Rosciomania*. A child named Clara Fisher, warranted to be only six years old, astonished the town with a performance of *Lord Flimnap*, in Garrick's romance of “Lilliput, and

wound up with the tent scene of "Richard the Third." The exhibition was wonderful for so young a creature ; but when she grew to be a woman, her talent fell to a very moderate standard. It had been so before with young Betty, who, as a youth, evinced an extraordinary aptitude for acting ; but his partisans, not content with lauding him up as a boy of great promise, insisted that he was actually at that moment a first-rate performer, and would soon eclipse all competitors. The public, as usual, suffered themselves to be carried away in the whirlpool. As Cumberland says, he was caressed by dukes, and, what is better still, by the daughters of dukes, flattered by wits, feasted by aldermen, stuck up in the windows of print-shops, and wafted to his morning's rehearsal in coronetted carriages, attended by powdered lackeys. One of the prints alluded to exhibited Master Betty and John Kemble on the same horse, Betty in front. He was represented as saying to Kemble, "I don't mean to insult you, but when two persons ride on a horse, one must ride behind."

George the Third, who was a determined play-goer, could never be induced to see the young Roscius. When told that he was a wonderfully clever boy, "Pooh, pooh !" said his Majesty, "I don't care for clever boys ; I'll wait till he's a man." He waited and never went ; for with manhood came disappointment and mediocrity. When Betty acted at Covent Garden, in 1813, the public had recovered their senses, and the manager never offered to renew the engagement. There have been a legion of youthful *Roscii* and *Rosciæ* on the stage, besides Master Betty and Clara Fisher, but none that ever rivalled the first either in popularity or profit. There was the little girl, Miss Mudie, who, at eight, told the audience with the most perfect self-possession, when they hissed her, that she knew it was an organised conspiracy, and claimed the protection of the British

public. Then came Master Balfe, and Master Burke, and lately the Batemans, and little Cordelia Howard, and little Anna Maria Quinn ; with infant Viottis, Lyras, and Sapphos without number ; some of whom clung pertinaciously on to childhood, till they were proved to be thirty, and were only driven away by a combined assault of baptismal registers.

Premature talent is not confined to the dramatic art, but many instances have been recorded in higher and more complicated sciences, which leave the early prodigies of the stage at a contemptible distance. Gassendi, according to Bernier, delivered lectures at four, taught astronomy to the boys of his village at seven, and harangued his bishop in Latin at ten. Pascal made discoveries in mathematics at eleven ; Grotius lisped law in his cradle ; Joseph Scaliger spoke thirteen languages at twelve ; and Ferdinand of Cordova was such a sage at nine, that the monks of Venice publicly denounced him as antichrist. Samuel Wesley, on the testimony of Dr. Burney, composed music before he could write. Mozart was a proficient on the harpsichord at four, and when just turned of five, wrote a concerto so difficult that nobody could execute it but himself ; William Crouch, of Norwich, played " God save the Queen," at little more than two years old, without any previous instruction, and a month or two after, astonished his father by a voluntary on the organ of his own composition. But these examples of precocity are nothing to that of the learned Lipsius, who, as we are assured by Mr. Shandy, senior, composed a work the day he was born. We must refer our readers to the book for my Uncle Toby's matter of fact commentary on the hypothesis, as being more natural, though far less profound, than that of the erudite Baillet.*

* See " Tristram Shandy," and " Jugement des Savans."

CHAPTER VIII.

EDMUND KEAN IN KING LEAR AND DE MONTFORT—REFERENCE TO THE ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE OF THE LATTER PLAY—CAUSES OF ITS NON-SUCCESS—SUPERIORITY OF THE STRANGER AS AN ACTING DRAMA—MISS BAILLIE'S PLAYS ON THE PASSIONS—"RAYNER" AND "CONSTANTINE PALÆOLOGUS"—MRS. HEMANS'S "VESPER OF PALERMO"—RETIREMENT AND DEATH OF JOHN EMERY—ROMEO COATES, THE AMATEUR OF FASHION—EDMUND KEAN AND YOUNG TOGETHER AT DRURY LANE—RETIREMENT OF JOSEPH MUNDEN—DEATH OF TALMA—EARLY EDUCATION OF CHARLES KEAN—HIS FIRST APPEARANCE ON THE STAGE.

IN 1820, Edmund Kean accomplished what had long been a leading object of his ambition, the performance of *King Lear*. The play continued under suspense from feelings of delicacy, during the last mental derangement of George III.; but the death of the good old King, on the 29th of January, in the year named above, removed the *taboo*. Great things were expected from this revival, and by none more sanguinely than by the actor himself. "I will make the audience," he said, "as mad as I shall be." The play drew crowded houses, and was repeated twenty-eight times in that season, but even Kean was not quite satisfied with the effect produced. The curse was tremendous, and there were other points of great excellence, but something was wanting to the completeness of the picture. Perhaps the cause might be that Shakespeare was still enfeebled by Tate's incongruous alterations. Towards the close of the year, Kean paid his first visit to America, where he was received with a ferment of enthusiasm,

and returned in September, 1821, with increased reputation and an overflowing harvest of dollars.

On the 27th of November, Miss Baillie's tragedy of "De Montfort," was disinterred for him, with a newly arranged fifth act. Five unattractive repetitions limited the success; but it is no reproach to Kean that he failed to render a play popular, which, adorned as it is by powerful writing, is so inherently heavy, that even John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons combined were unable to give it dramatic vitality. The authoress complimented Kean on his acting in the warmest terms, and the professed critics were almost unanimous in his favour. The poet, Campbell, who was present, was so enraptured with Kean's performance, that he sought his acquaintance in consequence, and talked of writing a play that he might represent the hero. In his "Life of Mrs. Siddons," he says, "There was so much silence, and so much applause, that though I had had my misgivings to the contrary, I was impressed, at the end, with a belief that the play had now acquired and would henceforth for ever retain stage popularity. But when I congratulated Kean on having rescued 'De Montfort,' he told me that, though a fine poem, it would never be an acting play."

When "De Montfort" was originally announced for representation at Drury Lane, in 1800, the public roused up from the periodical apathy which ever and anon comes over them; the critics prophesied the approach of a new era in dramatic literature, and the talents of the two great artists, then in their zenith, left no doubt that the conceptions of the authoress would be fully realized. The expectation was great, and the disappointment commensurate. The audience yawned in spite of themselves, in spite of the exquisite poetry, the vigorous passion, and the transcendent acting of John

Kemble, supported by Mrs. Siddons. There was a total absence of underplot or skilfully interwoven subordinate characters: no variety, no relief. It was all De Montfort, through five long acts, with his deadly hatred, his unsatisfactory arguments, his gloomy meditations, and their inevitable catastrophe. There was a dreary unredeemed monotony, which coiled round the entire *dramatis personæ* like a sepulchral shroud, and reduced to suffering what should have been enjoyment. It was a positive reprieve when the curtain closed all in, and though the spectators felt that they had been dealing with a very superior production, many doubted if they understood it: few shed tears (the most genuine test of tragedy), and still fewer cared to undergo the operation a second time. The play was consigned to the shelf after a short and unproductive run of eleven nights.

More than twenty years later, the same result ensued from the same cause. The play, as we have seen, was still found to be a ponderous monodrama, and its resurrection was even more transient than its first brief existence. All this is very discouraging, and somewhat extraordinary when there is such undoubted excellence in the writing, and that writing has been so ably illustrated by the best performers of modern days. Look at the "Stranger," which keeps the stage, and never fails to interest the audience, although recent critics have entered into a league against this and other dramas of the same class. It scarcely possesses a title of the merit or pretensions of "De Montfort," yet it is a far more effective play, and the same great actors, Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, immortalized this German impropriety, this daring outrage upon our social feelings, while they failed in giving permanent life to the purer and more legitimate English tragedy. It must be (as

we think) that the one, with all its faults and inferiority, is more natural than the other, more intelligible to the mass of spectators, more likely to happen to-day or to-morrow. The one is simple, the other strained. It is the rule opposed to the exception. We sympathise more readily with what is likely, than with what is barely possible. Many are inclined to think that the authoress of "De Montfort" has gone beyond nature in colouring hatred so strongly, when arising from an insignificant cause, and cherished pertinaciously after so long an interval. For one case of romantic or highly wrought incident, either of crime or virtue, and which only happens to peculiar natures under peculiar contingencies, there occur twenty common ones in the ordinary incidents of every day life; and in which, as everybody can understand them, they take a greater interest. If this reasoning is correct, it may be applied as a general rule, although introduced here to bear on a particular instance, and proves that a mere skilful playwright may carry away the public suffrage, which is sometimes refused to higher genius and far more profound conceptions.

Miss Baillie having written her double series of "Plays on the Passions,"—which were generally pronounced more adapted to the closet than the stage,—published, in 1804, an additional volume of "Miscellaneous Plays," intended expressly for representation, and all of which, at different times, had been offered to, and rejected by the London managers. She was evidently solicitous that her dramas should be acted, and says in the Preface, "It has been, and still is, my strongest desire to add a few pieces to the stock of what may be called our national or permanently acting plays, how unequal soever my abilities may be to the object of my ambition." And again, "I have wished to leave

behind me, in the world, a few plays, some of which might have a chance of continuing to be acted even in our canvas theatres and barns, and of preserving to my name some remembrance of that species of amusement which I have, above every other, enjoyed." She says, very justly too, that the failure of her attempts to add to the acted drama is the more to be regretted, as having no opportunity of seeing any of her productions on the stage, many faults respecting effect, arising from want of practical experience, would remain undiscovered, and thus render improvement in her subsequent productions almost impossible. This Preface was published after the first production of "*De Montfort*," although written probably at an antecedent date. That she had, even without experience, some idea of what are called stage effects, or *coups de théâtre*, may be evidenced by several instances from her dramas:—such as the arrangements for the execution of *Ethwald*;* the sawing asunder of the planks supporting the scaffold by *Ohio*, the negro, in "*Rayner*," and the contrivance of *Othoric* to escape death with torture, in "*Constantine Palæologus*."

"*A propos des bottes*," as somebody says in an old French farce, and everybody quotes when they want an apt sentence—there is a passage in a letter from Sir Walter Scott to Mrs. Hemans (in Lockhart's "*Life*"), on the production of her tragedy, called the "*Vespers of Palermo*," in Edinburgh, in 1824, which supports so strongly the argument that construction supersedes language with our present audiences, that we venture to insert it. He says, "they care little [that is, audiences] about

* A very similar effect was long afterwards copied from this, and introduced in a play at Drury Lane, called the "*Red Mask*," adapted from Cooper's novel of the "*Bravo*," when the execution of Jacopo was transacted much after the same fashion.

poetry or fine writing, on the stage. It is situation, passion, and rapidity of action which seem to be the principal requisites for ensuring the success of a modern drama; but I trust by dint of a special jury, the piece may have a decent success; certainly I should not hope for much more." This play did succeed moderately in Edinburgh, although it had been an outside failure in London, but never became popular or attractive, and most probably from a deficiency of the qualities so strongly insisted on in Sir Walter's letter.

On the 29th of June, 1822, the boards of Covent Garden were trodden for the last time by John Emery, who died in the course of the following month, at the comparatively early age of forty-five. He has left no successor in his peculiar line, which expired with him. No actor ever evinced more power blended with rich humour than Emery did when portraying the rough and simple nature of unpolished country life. He was great in all he undertook, even down to such small but defined sketches as *Barnardine* and *Justice Silence*. He was a painter, too, as well as an actor, and brought his knowledge and taste in the one art to bear on the other. In such opposite characters as *Caliban*, *Dogberry*, and *Barnardine* he appeared to be inspired with the very genius of Shakespeare; but *Tyke*, in the "School of Reform," was the part with which he peculiarly identified his name. It was an impersonation of tremendous energy and truth, equal in the impassioned scenes to the highest efforts of the first tragic actors. Emery could produce effects out of the slenderest materials, and give prominence to parts which, in the hands of a common artist, would have been held of no importance—such as *Gibbet* and *Lockit*. He usually visited the provinces in conjunction with Irish Johnstone. They worked well together, and the

combined talents of two comedians so distinct in their walk produced a corresponding attraction. Emery was sometimes encored in the jealous scene of *Fixture*, in "A Roland for an Oliver,"—a compliment, except in this case, and *Mawworm's* sermon, when delivered by Liston, invariably confined to singers. Romeo Coates would sometimes gratify the audience by a voluntary repetition of his dying agonies; and the celebrated Dublin amateur, Luke Plunkett, once essayed to repeat the fight at Bosworth after he was killed; but the victorious *Richmond* held him forcibly down, and refused again to "stand the hazard of the die" against such a desperate adversary. The mention of the celebrated "amateur of fashion," Robert, or, as he was more generally called, Romeo Coates, from his favourite character, may excuse a line or two in our reminiscences. A West India proprietor, and the owner of extensive estates in the Island of Antigua, he possessed ample means for indulging a whimsical taste, and, some forty years ago, was a man upon town of the first order of singularity. We recollect him a constant appendage to Bond Street, while that yet favoured locality was still the fashionable lounge, and before Regent Street was thought of. He drove a light claret-coloured curricule, in shape like a cockle-shell, with beautiful bay horses and two splendidly-mounted outriders. He was usually attired in nankeen tights and white silk stockings, to display his legs, on the symmetry of which he greatly prided himself. His harness, panels, and liveries were bedizened with silver cocks, his adopted armorial bearings, with the motto, "Whilst I live I'll crow." These unlucky cocks furnished an apt cue to his ridiculers, for, as soon as he died in *Romeo* or *Lothario*, there arose from the gallery of the Haymarket, a simultaneous burst of crowing, which sounded as if every farm-yard in England

had furnished its quota for the gratulation. A cruel trick was once played off upon Coates, by sending him a fictitious invitation to one of the Prince Regent's grand fêtes at Carlton House. When his name was announced, and he appeared in gorgeous costume, the Prince, who at once recollected that he was not included amongst the guests, whispered to those about him, "This poor man has been hoaxed, but I will disappoint them." He then advanced to Coates with that peculiar urbanity by which he was distinguished, and welcomed him in the most cordial manner. Divested of his theatrical mania, Mr. Coates was perfectly rational in conduct, and well informed; while in disposition he was harmless, amiable, and charitable to a degree. He lived to a great age, and owed his death, at last, in some sort, to the theatre. Coming out of Drury Lane, he was run over by a street cabriolet, and died from the effects of the accident on the 4th of March, 1848. There have been many absurd theatrical amateurs, but none to compete with Romeo Coates, who always seemed insensible to the ridicule he excited.

During the season of 1822-3, at Drury Lane, a great sensation was produced in the theatrical world by the combined performances of Kean and Young. They appeared together for the first time on the 27th of November, 1822, as *Othello* and *Iago*, followed in due course by *Jaffier* and *Pierre*, *Posthumus* and *Iachimo*. These three plays were very attractive. Both performers were roused by the competition, and played their very best. On two benefit occasions they acted *Lothaire* and *Guiscard* in "*Adelgitha*," and *Alexander* and *Clytus*, in "*Alexander the Great*."

On the 31st of May, 1824, Joseph Munden left the stage. His retiring characters were *Sir Robert Bramble*, in the "*Poor Gentleman*," and *Dozey*, in "*Past Ten*

O'Clock," with the usual valedictory address on similar occasions. He came out at Covent Garden in 1790. Reader, he was a great actor, and, if he sometimes coloured a little beyond nature, it was impossible not to laugh at him. He had not simply a face, but an endless gallery of faces. He has been called a grimacer, but this very extravagance added power to what he uttered. When he appeared to have exhausted all his humour, he had ever a stroke or two in store. He possessed also the peculiar merit of playing serious old men as well as comic ones. His *Captain Bertram* and *Old Dornton* were equal to his *Sir Francis Gripe* and *Old Rapid*. His *Marall* was inimitable, and his *Nipperkin* and *Christopher Sly* never to be forgotten. No living man could wonder or see a ghost like Munden. The old Spanish proverb says, "He who has not seen Seville has lost a miracle." So have you lost a marvellous treat, such as you will never have provided for you again, if you began to frequent playhouses after Joseph Munden had departed. You are as unlucky as Darteneuf, the great epicure of Pope's day, who died just before turtle was first imported from the West Indies. Shall we attempt to describe this incomparable comedian and his vagaries? If we were to write for a hundred years, we could never emulate the brilliant sentences of Charles Lamb, in "Elia;" and to them we must refer for the better edification of those who may like to read of what they can never hope to look on.

Munden was careful, and fond of money, even to extreme parsimony. He died in 1832, aged seventy-four, leaving a widow, one son (an officer in the army), and a daughter. His personal effects were sworn under £20,000. He was supposed to be much richer, but the emoluments and savings of actors are invariably overrated.

During the summer of 1824, Edmund Kean visited the Continent for the second time, and seems to have made a great impression on the monks of St. Bernard. They spoke with delight of him to many subsequent travellers, and he so thoroughly reciprocated the sentiment, that he inscribed in their book that he had there passed the happiest day of his life. On his return, he became involved in the well-known trial from the result of which his health and popularity never recovered. A second visit to America again recruited his funds; but his memory began to fail, and, though he could retain his old parts, he had lost the faculty of acquiring a new one. He was much too young in years to feel the inroads of time through lawful wear and tear, but he had impaired his powers by reckless indulgence.

On the 19th of October, 1826, the celebrated French actor, Talma, died at his house, in Paris. His age was supposed to be sixty-three, but on that point he was mysterious. Whenever asked to decide the question, he replied, with a smile, that "actors and women should never be dated. We are old and young," added he, "according to the characters we represent." This great artist belongs not to the history of the English stage, but he associated much with Englishmen; and, in a theatrical record, it would be an unpardonable omission not to give him a few tributary passages.

Francis Joseph Talma may be ranked amongst the most remarkable men of the age and country in which he lived. His theatrical eminence was only one of his many claims to distinction. The Garrick of the French stage, combined with the powers of a first-rate actor, the man of literature, the well-bred gentleman, the honest citizen, the steady friend, the affectionate husband and father, and the agreeable companion, endowed with ample stores of knowledge and unrivalled

conversational powers. His memory resembled a vast magazine from whence he could draw supplies at will, without danger of exhausting the hoard.

A short time before his death, Talma was asked by an admiring friend why he did not write his own biography, as La Clairon, Le Kain, Preville, and Molé had done before him. He answered that he had not time; and, that having so incessantly studied and repeated the thoughts and words of others, he could find no original phrases in which to express his ideas. On a just comparison of pretensions, it may be admitted that Talma was the greatest tragic actor that France has ever produced. Men of high stamp preceded him—such as Baron, Le Kain, Monvel, La Rive.* He excelled them all; and none of his successors, to the present year inclusive, are worthy to rank in the same file. There is not a shadow of Talma amongst the living men. Inferior to Garrick in versatility, he excelled him in classical acquirements, and had built himself more on the ancient models. He was the only French actor who had the good taste and courage to disregard the measured monotony of the rhyme, in which all their tragedies were written, and to break through the fetters of conventional declamation. His first attempts were comparative failures. He was pronounced too natural and familiar—not sufficiently imposing for the million. There were a few discerning exceptions, however, who saw that the true spirit was in him; and Ducis, who has been called the “French Shakespeare,” was amongst the number. He introduced himself to the debutant,

* Monvel had great sensibility, but no advantages of person or face. La Rive was handsome but cold. It was said of the first, that he was a soul without a body; and of the second, that he was a body without a soul. “To make a perfect actor,” said Champfort, “La Rive should be compelled to swallow Monvel.”

and proffered a friendship which terminated only with his life. Talma and Ducis have been materially indebted to each other for much of the reputation they both enjoy.

In 1789, Talma being then in his twenty-sixth year, a play, called "Charles the Ninth," was presented to the Théâtre Français, by Chenier. Many were opposed to the production of this drama. The political sentiments were considered dangerous and inflammatory. The managers thought they contained the elements of a tumult, but the friends of the author had a predominant influence, and compelled its production. St. Phal, the leading tragedian of the company, was afraid of undertaking the terrible hero of St. Bartholomew, and rejected the character. The next in rank, one by one, as a matter of course, considered themselves treated with indignity, in being applied to as substitutes or stop-gaps, and peremptorily refused. As a last and desperate resource, Talma was thought of, and eagerly embraced the opportunity. Here was the chance he wanted—an original part, which might make him for ever. The opposite extreme lay in the balance, but the hazard gave him no concern. "He is quite mad enough to risk it," thought his companions; and when it was known that he had so decided, many pronounced his funeral elegy. "Here will be an end of Talma," said they; "the play and the actor will be condemned together."

The result falsified their wishes and expectations. Talma had closely studied the historical descriptions and pictures of Charles IX.; had impressed himself with a perfect knowledge of his personal appearance, dress, manners, and peculiarities. He presented himself upon the stage a resuscitated portrait of the weak and blood-thirsty Valois.

In 1791, Talma married. The wife of his choice,

Mademoiselle Vanhove, was fifteen years older than himself, but still a very attractive, charming woman; an actress in the same theatre, and the possessor of a considerable fortune. The latter circumstance induced many to say that on his part the marriage was one of interest rather than inclination; but the affectionate life they led, and the happiness of their union, contradicted the rumour by the most convincing evidence.

Much idle gossip, which has no foundation in truth, has been propagated relative to the early acquaintance of Talma with the first Napoleon; how they were at school together, and afterwards young men upon town in Paris; and how, when they dined at a restaurateur's, the actor paid the reckoning, because the future emperor had no cash in his pocket. According to memoranda left by Talma himself, their first meeting took place on the 18th of June, 1792, in the green-room of the Théâtre Français. Napoleon, then Captain Buonaparte, had been brought there by Michaud, an actor of the company, and at his own particular request introduced to Talma, to whom he paid several flattering compliments on his performance of *Charles IX*. During a short conversation at this interview, Talma discovered that his new acquaintance had read much and reflected more, and that he was no ordinary man, although neither of heroic stature, nor imposing in personal appearance. There can be no doubt that then, and afterwards, Napoleon was in great pecuniary distress; but it does not appear, although often asserted, that he received aid from Talma. Their acquaintance, at that time, was too slight. The actor relates the following anecdote:—

Napoleon, to obtain immediate support, while vainly soliciting employment, had successively pledged whatever trinkets he possessed, rings, brooches, and watches,

and his resources were entirely exhausted. The man of destiny was reduced to despair, and resolved to end all by a plunge in the Seine. On his way to the Pont Neuf, he ran against some one in his abstraction, and raising his head, recognised an old school-fellow of Brienne. The latter had just received from his notary the sum of 20,000f.; the former was intent on suicide, because he had no longer the price of a dinner. They divided the money between them, and Napoleon returned to his lodging. If that warm-hearted comrade of the college had accidentally passed down another street, the history of the next twenty years would have been written without the names of Lodi, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, Moscow, Leipzig, and Waterloo.

The acquaintance between the great actor and future emperor gradually ripened into friendship. When the Egyptian expedition was planned, Talma, in his enthusiasm, volunteered to accompany the commander-in-chief. Napoleon, the only person who could by authority prevent this enterprise, set himself entirely against it. "You must not commit such an act of rash folly, Talma," said he. "You have a brilliant course before you; leave fighting to those who are unable to do anything better."

When Napoleon rose to be first consul, Talma, with the modesty of his nature, and the good sense of a man of the world, made his visits less frequent at the Tuileries. His reception was, however, as cordial as in the days of their nearer equality. With the progress of events Napoleon became emperor, and the actor naturally concluded that the intimacy of the sovereign and the subject must then entirely cease. But in a few days a note was addressed to him by the first chamberlain, couched in these words: "His Imperial Majesty has

felt much surprise at not receiving M. Talma's personal felicitations. It appears as if he intended to withdraw himself from his Majesty, which is far from his Majesty's wish. M. Talma is hereby invited to present himself at the Tuileries as soon as he finds convenient." It may be supposed that such an invitation was not declined. He waited on the Emperor, was received with his former friendship, repeated his visits constantly, and never without being welcomed with peculiar distinction.

All who enjoyed Talma's society are unanimous in praise of his amiable qualities. Lady Morgan (in her book on France) says: "His dignity and tragic powers on the stage are curiously but charmingly contrasted with the simplicity, playfulness, and gaiety of his most unassuming, unpretending manners in private life." He was thoroughly an honest man, with a cultivated mind, an unerring taste, and a warm, true heart. He dispensed his affluence with hospitality devoid of ostentation. His principal residence was at a villa which he had purchased at Brumoy, in the neighbourhood of Paris, with extensive grounds and prospects, where he maintained a splendid establishment, and delighted to pass his time secluded from the noise and bustle of the metropolis. Twice a-week he went to Paris to perform.

Talma's superiority was never contested by any ambitious rival, yet he suffered much during a series of years (not in popularity, but in personal annoyance), from the severe and unjustly depreciatory criticisms of Geoffroy, a celebrated Aristarchus of his day, who had checked the success of *St. Prix*, lacerated the decline of *Molé*, and driven *La Rive* prematurely from the stage. He had a double infusion of the waspish acerbity of *Freron* (the antagonist of *Voltaire*), with ten times his erudition and tact in the art of tormenting.

Talma writhed under these assaults, which constantly revived at regular intervals, but he was too old then to change his style, and too proud to adopt lessons so dogmatically administered. He derived consolation, however, from the enthusiastic encomiums of Madame de Staël, liberally bestowed in her work entitled, "Germany;" and in the letters addressed to him by Corinna, from her involuntary exile at Coppet.

Talma, so late as December, 1821, when he was verging towards his sixtieth year, achieved one of his greatest triumphs, in Jouy's Tragedy of "Sylla." Napoleon had been dead only a few months. The actor determined to recall the living image of his early friend and subsequent patron, by the closest resemblance which art could enable him to present. He dressed his hair exactly after the well-remembered style of the deceased emperor, and his dictatorial wreath exhibited an accurate facsimile of the laurel diadem in gold with which the first Napoleon was crowned at Notre Dame. The intended identity was recognised at once; and when, in the last scene, he descended majestically from the rostrum, and, laying down the coronet, pronounced the line—

"J'ai gouverné sans peur, et j'abdique sans crainte,

the whole audience imagined that they saw the embodied spirit of Napoleon standing in awful majesty before them, and demanding their judgment on his actions. The effect upon such an excitable public may be easily conceived. The government trembled, and thought of interdicting the play; but they confined themselves to a private communication, in which Talma was directed to curl his hair in future, and adopt a totally new arrangement of the head.

Something similar to this occurred in England in

1835, when Tallyrand was ambassador. In a play called "The Minister and Mercer," W. Farren, who acted the *Minister*, wished to present a fac-simile of the old time-serving diplomatist. His intentions transpired, and he was ordered to send his wig for the inspection of the Lord Chamberlain, who suggested certain changes, to prevent the rupture of the *entente cordiale* between the two countries, which such a palpable insult might have endangered.

Talma's last original character, *Charles the Sixth* (in the tragedy of M. Delaville), proved also to be his final performance. While representing this aged monarch, imbecile, demented, and worn out by sufferings and misfortune, he himself was struggling with the mortal disease which came as the herald of death, and was soon destined to close his earthly career. He was taken ill in Paris, and wished once more to revisit his country seat at Brumoy, but his strength failed so rapidly, that removal was found to be impossible. He expired gradually, and without pain, on the 19th of October, 1826, at his own house in the Rue de la Tour-des-Dames. His last words were, "The worst of all is that I cannot see." His sight had completely failed during his illness. Within a few hours after his death, two painters took sketches of his head, and David, the sculptor, was employed on a cast, from which was afterwards executed, in marble, the statue destined to occupy a prominent position in the hall of the Théâtre Français. Two days later, on the 21st of October, the body of Talma was borne to its final resting-place on earth, in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, attended by a concourse of at least one hundred thousand admiring mourners; and as the coffin was lowered, his friend, comrade, and rival, Lafont, deposited on the lid a wreath of *immortelles*, and pronounced a funeral

oration which was long remembered for its affectio
sincerity.

The annals of the French stage embrace three di
tinct epochs, signalized by three great masters, each
remarkable for an opposite style; Baron, Le Kain, and
Talma. A close parallel presents itself in our own
dramatic history, when we turn to the ages, schools,
and names of David Garrick, John Kemble, and
Edmund Kean.

Our chronological series now reaches 1827. Thirteen
eventful years had elapsed since that decisive evening
in February 1814, when Edmund Kean, the father,
had, on the boards of Drury Lane Theatre, identified
himself with Shylock. Charles Kean, the son, in due
course of time was despatched to school, preparatory
for Eton College. His father resolved to give him a
good education, an advantage which he fully appreciated,
though it had not fallen to his own lot. The boy was
first sent to the preparatory establishment of Mr. Styles,
at Thames Ditton, and was subsequently placed under
the Reverend E. Polchampton, at Worplesdon, in
Surrey, and afterwards at Greenford, near Harrow. At
this seminary he remained several years; the number
of scholars being limited, and principally composed of
noblemen's sons. In June, 1824, he entered Eton as an
"Oppidan," his father fixing his allowance, for board
and education, at £300 per annum. His tutor was the
Reverend Mr. Chapman, since Bishop of Colombo: Dr.
Goodall, Provost; and Dr. Keate, Head Master. He
remained at Eton three years, being placed as high as
the rules of the institution, having reference to age,
would allow. When taken away, he was in the upper
division, and had obtained considerable credit by his
Latin verses.

Boating and cricket matches have ever been the

two great amusements of the Etonians during summer ; but the abolition or modification of these time-honoured, manly exercises, is now menaced by short-sighted, mistaken reformers, who, in the rabid furor of instruction, forget the practical truism that—

“ All work and no play,
Make Jack a dull boy.”

Charles Kean became so expert a leader in aquatics, that he was chosen second captain of the “ Long Boats,” as they are called—no insignificant honour in Etonian eyes. Under the tuition of the celebrated Angelo, he also won distinction as an accomplished fencer, a valuable acquirement in the profession he was destined to pursue. His contemporaries and associates included many youths of rank and promise, who have since risen to marked eminence amongst the “ men of the time.” In the list we may enumerate the Duke of Newcastle, the late Marquis of Waterford, Lords Eglington, Sandwich, Selkirk, Boscawen, Canning, Walpole, Adare, Alford ; Messrs. W. Gladstone, Somerset, Cowper, Holmes, Saville, Craven, Wentworth, Middleton, Watts Russell, Alexander, Eyre, &c.*

Up to the period at which we have now arrived, everything appeared outwardly happy and prosperous in the Kean family. The domestic skeleton was there, but, as yet, invisible. Charles was repeatedly assured by both his parents that he would inherit a splendid fortune, and be brought up to a distinguished profession. His mother preferred the church ; his father inclined to the navy ; but his own predilection was decidedly for

* A series of highly interesting articles entitled “ Recollections of Eton College in the days of Charles Kean,” have recently appeared in the *Era* and attracted much attention. They abound in characteristic anecdotes.

a military career. There can be no doubt whatever, that Edmund Kean might have maintained himself and family in all the elegancies of life, and have left behind him a sum amounting to 50,000*l*. Since the days of Garrick, no actor had received so much money in the same short space of time. But clouds had long been gathering, and a crisis was at hand. Habits of irregularity and reckless extravagance had gradually settled upon him. Ill-chosen associates estranged him from his wife and son. He had still a few sincere and anxious friends, who stepped in and endeavoured to arrest his downward course; but a legion of evil counsellors hemmed him round, and the warning voice passed by unheeded. He was falling from his high position; his popularity was on the decline, his physical powers were sinking under premature decay, and his finances were exhausted.

Charles, who had for some time suspected the total derangement of his father's affairs, was startled into conviction by a pressing letter from his mother, received during his last half-year at Eton, in the early part of 1827, entreating him to come to her immediately. He obtained permission to absent himself for a few days, and hastened to London. He found her suffering the most intense anxiety, and she implored him not to leave her. It appeared that Mr. Calcraft, a member of Parliament, and one of the most influential of the Drury Lane Committee of that day, had offered to procure for him a cadetship in the East India Company's service. His father thought the offer too eligible to be declined, and in giving notice that he intended to accept it, ordered his son to make instant preparations for his departure. Mrs. Kean had been entirely separated from her husband for two or three years; she was reduced to a broken, pitiable state of health, nearly

bed-ridden, helpless as an infant, and without a single relative to whom she could look for succour or consolation. Weighing these circumstances well, Charles Kean formed his determination, and sought an interview with his father, at the Hummums, Covent Garden, where he resided at that time, to bring matters to a final understanding.

Edmund Kean was then precariously situated. He had dissipated his realised capital, and was living from day to day on the uncertain earnings, which might cease altogether with increasing infirmities. He still commanded a large salary when able to work, but his power of continuing that supply was little to be depended on. He told his son that there remained no alternative for him but to accept the offer of the cadetship; that he would provide his Indian outfit, and this being done, he must depend thenceforth entirely upon his own exertions, and never apply to him for any future support or assistance. Charles replied that he was perfectly contented, and willing to embrace these conditions, provided something like an adequate allowance was *secured* to his mother. Finding that his father no longer had it in his power to promise this with any degree of certainty, he respectfully, but firmly, told him, that he would not leave England while his mother lived, and declined, with thanks, the kind proposal of Mr. Calcraft.

This answer excited the anger of the elder Kean to the highest pitch; he gave way to the most intemperate passion, and a painful scene ensued.

"What will you do," said he, "when I discard you and you are thrown entirely on your own resources?"

"In that case," replied the son, "I shall be compelled to seek my fortune on the stage (the father smiled in derision); and though I may never rise to eminence

or be a great actor, I shall at least obtain a livelihood for my mother and myself, and be obliged to no one."

The father stormed, repeating, almost with inarticulate fury, what he had often said before, that he was resolved to be the first and last tragedian of the name of Kean. The son endured a torrent of vituperation without losing his temper, or forgetting the respect which, under any circumstances, he felt to be still due to a parent. They parted, and from that hour all intercourse between them was suspended.

The result of this conversation was communicated through Mrs. Kean to Mr. Calcraft, and drew from that gentleman the following reply :—

" Hanover Square,
" February 27th, 1827.

" DEAR MADAM,—

" I confess it was a great disappointment to me, that you and your son refused (if it could be obtained) the cadetship to the East Indies; for, after what you had said, I did not expect it. Yet, having been much pleased with your son's manner, and appearance, and being thoroughly sensible of his unprotected situation, I shall not withhold from him any services which may be in my power. Always wishing you to keep in mind that I am entirely without official interest,

" I am, dear Madam,

" Your obedient servant,

" J. CALCRAFT."

In the following July, when the Eton vacation came on, Charles Kean was informed that his accounts were paid up, his allowance stopped, and that he was not to return. A short time before this, a young nobleman, one of his intimate associates, with whom he had first

become acquainted at Mr. Polehampton's preparatory school, seeing him unusually dejected, inquired the cause. Kean, in the fulness of his heart, told him the result of his interview with his father, and that, in all probability, he should be driven to adopt the stage as his profession. "I quite approve of your resolution," said his aristocratic friend, "and commend you warmly for it; but recollect this, if you do so, from that hour you and I must be strangers, as I never did, and never will, speak to or acknowledge an actor." He kept his word. About a year or so afterwards, when Charles Kean was fulfilling an engagement at Leamington, in Warwickshire, the noble lord, finding himself in the same hotel, moved off instantly, bag and baggage, to avoid the unhallowed propinquity; thus, at least, carrying out the consistency of his prejudice, without regard to personal convenience.

Very fortunately, Charles Kean had contracted no private debts, a rare occurrence in an Etonian, and particularly in one who had hitherto been well supplied with pocket money. He made his way to London, and hastened immediately to his mother's lodgings. He found her in sickness, in sorrow, and in poverty. A small yearly income, hitherto allowed by her husband, had been entirely withdrawn. They were without cash, and utterly destitute of resources. A more forlorn condition can scarcely be imagined.

Precisely at this juncture, a misunderstanding arose between Edmund Kean and Mr. Stephen Price, the well-known American lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, and for the first time the great tragedian left his old theatrical home, the scene of his early triumphs, to engage with Mr. Charles Kemble at Covent Garden. Mr. Price, having heard how the son was situated, and thinking the name of Kean a powerful talisman, immediately

made him an offer of an engagement at Drury Lane Theatre for three years, with a salary of 10*l.* a-week, to be increased to 11*l.* and 12*l.* during the second and third years, in case of success. Such an offer appeared to drop from the clouds; the heart of the young man bounded with hope, and the proposal was gratefully accepted. He stipulated, however, that he must first write to his father, who was then absent from London, and make him acquainted with the circumstance. Price approved of this, received the letter, and undertook to forward it; but no answer was returned; and there is reason to believe that the missive never reached the hands for which it was intended.

Thus Charles Kean became an actor. Necessity, and not choice, determined his lot in life. How little does the world in general know of the secret springs of our actions. It judges by the surface only, and can seldom penetrate the hidden depths, or sound the under-currents, which, with controlling power, impel us on a course we otherwise might avoid, and never would have selected. For this act he was generally condemned. Mr. Calcraft considered him as rash and ill-advised. His father's partisans denounced him as flying in the face of parental authority, wilful, thankless, and disobedient. Some shrugged their shoulders, while others shook their heads, but none whispered a word of encouragement. And all because he would not leave a helpless mother without protection; who, if his father had died suddenly during his absence, might have starved in her bed!

The future course of the young adventurer being now marked out, his first appearance on any stage took place at Drury Lane Theatre, on the opening night of the season, Monday, October the 1st, 1827. *Young Norval*, in Home's tragedy of "Douglas," was the character

selected for the occasion. He was yet under seventeen, and so complete a stripling in appearance, as well as in years, that the authorities of the theatre sat in council on the question of, whether he should be announced as Mr. Kean, *junior*, or *Master* Kean. He settled the point by rejecting the latter designation with the utmost disdain.

On the Saturday night previous to his appearance, a dress-rehearsal was suggested by the manager, that he might "face the lamps" for the first time, and familiarise himself with his stage costume. Many personal friends of Mr. Price, with some members of the committee, were present, who complimented him warmly on the success of this, his preliminary essay. While supping afterwards in the manager's room, with true boyish feeling, he expressed a wish to show himself to his mother in the stage habiliments of *Norval*. The manager consented, but wondering that he still lingered in the theatre, drew from him, in a whisper, the reluctant confession that he was without the means of paying for a hackney coach. Price supplied the money, and young Kean flew to his mother's lodgings to display his finery, relate the encouragement he had received, and cheer her with the hopes and expectations with which he panted for the following Monday.

The expected night arrived. Curiosity to see the son of the great actor, Edmund Kean, filled the vast theatre to overflowing. A first appearance before a London public, in those days, and at one of the great national establishments, was a much more serious affair than it is at present—a trying ordeal even for the experienced veteran, who might feel confident in his powers, and had often tested their effects. What then must it have been to the unpractised novice, trembling at the sound of his own voice, and unnerved even by the sight of his

own name for the first time exhibited in print? The awful moment is come—he stands before the audience, fairly launched on the experiment of his life—he has no time to think of all that hangs on the issue of the next two hours, but must brace his spirits to the task, and sink or swim, according to the measure of his own unaided courage.

The play was cast as follows:—

Young Norval	Mr. CHARLES KEAN.
<i>(His first appearance on any stage.)</i>	
Lord Randolph	Mr. MUDE.
Glenalvon	Mr. WALLACK.
Old Norval	Mr. COOPER.
Lady Randolph	Mrs. WEST.
Anna	Mrs. KNIGHT.

Young Norval does not appear until the opening of the second act. His entrance is preceded by that of the retainers of Lord Randolph, bearing in custody the faithless servant, “the trembling coward who forsook his master.” The audience unluckily were led to mistake the latter worthy for the new candidate, and greeted him with the rounds of applause intended for the hero of the evening. Here was another damper, for, in such situations, the veriest trifles have their effect. The debutant recovered himself notwithstanding, and went through his part, at the opening, with hesitating doubt, but as he warmed into the business of the scene, with courage and gradually increasing animation. Some unprejudiced judges (and more than one were present who took an interest in his fate) could detect, even through all the rawness of an unformed style, and the embarrassment of a novel situation, the germs of latent ability, and the promise of future excellence. The audience received him throughout with indulgence, encouraged

him by frequent approbation, and called for him when the tragedy concluded. It was success certainly, but not decided success. Charles Kean felt, that although he had passed his examination with tolerable credit, he had neither carried away "high honours," nor achieved what in theatrical parlance is termed "a hit." On the following morning he rushed with feverish anxiety to the papers, and, without pausing, read them to his mother. His fate and hers, their future subsistence, the hope that sustained them, the bread they were eating, the roof that covered them—all lay in the balance—and all depended on the dictum of the all-powerful press! It was unanimous in condemnation. Not simple disapproval, or qualified censure, but sentence of utter incapacity—stern, bitter, crushing, and conclusive. There was no modified praise, no exceptional encouragement, no admission of undeveloped faculties, no allowance for youth and inexperience. The crude effort of a school-boy was dealt with as the matured study of a practised man.

The papers gave no quarter, but went in unanimously, to burn, sink, and destroy—an overwhelming fleet against a little light-armed gunboat. The hearts of both mother and son were struck with dismay—they wept in concert; and Charles Kean's first impulse was to abandon the stage in despair. He hastened to Mr. Price, and proposed to cancel the engagement, but this the manager considerately declined, and urged him to persevere. Hope is ever strong in the heart of youth. In the morning of life the voice of cheering approbation impels more than the leaden tongue of censure can impede.

For good or evil, to make or mar a fortune, the press, as an organ of critical opinion, is invested with tremendous power. How important then is it that such power

should be exercised by able delegates, with sound discretion, and strict impartiality ! If ever there was a case in which the slow but unerring award of time has reversed a hasty judgment, that case stands prominently conspicuous in the position which Charles Kean has won for himself, in defiance of many obstacles, and in the teeth of reiterated discouragement.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLES KEAN AT DRURY LANE—HE LEAVES LONDON FOR PRACTICE IN THE COUNTRY—HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN DUBLIN—HIS CORDIAL WELCOME—ANECDOTES OF THE DUBLIN GALLERIES—INDULGENCE OF THE PUBLIC TO THE CAPRICES OF FAVORITE ACTORS—EDMUND KEAN AND THE AUDIENCE OF THE COBOURG THEATRE—CHARLES KEAN AT GLASGOW—RECONCILIATION WITH HIS FATHER—THEY PERFORM TOGETHER FOR THE SON'S BENEFIT, IN "BRUTUS"—NATURAL ACTING THE CONSUMMATION OF ART—TALMA'S OPINION ON THIS POINT—GARRICK AND DR. JOHNSON—ANECDOTE NOT IN BOSWELL—HARMLESS VANITY OF ACTORS—MODERN CRITICISM ON GARRICK'S KING LEAR—DAVIES, MURPHY, AND GALT, ON GARRICK—MISTAKES OF ANECDOTE-HUNTERS—GARRICK'S CAREER A VERY HAPPY ONE.

ON the day following Charles Kean's first appearance, a strenuous partisan of his father, supposed to be a writer of some critical ability, addressed the following letter to Edmund Kean, containing an account of what had taken place, with a prognostic as to the future. The letter becomes remarkable when compared with the sequel.

" London, 2d Oct. 1827.

" MY DEAR KEAN,—

" I am sure you feel no otherwise than anxious to know the result of last night's effort on the part of your son. 'I pray you, Sir, take patience,' nor let the knowledge of the fact that he failed to attain, as he was taught to think he should, in one night, and with a single exertion,* that eminence which his father took

* How could the writer, who was unacquainted with the boy, dive into thoughts which he never uttered even if he conceived them?—so much for prejudice.

years of labour to secure, cause you one moment's uneasiness. I went to see his performance; and send you by this post, in the *Times* newspaper, the best critique thereon: it is strictly correct. Every performer that came on the stage in the first act was, by the *favourable* audience, taken for your son, and applauded. Even the 'trembling coward,' who, as you remember, enters a short time previously to *Young Norval*, was loudly and vehemently greeted for 'Mr. Kean, jun.' When Charles first came on the scene, he was heartily received. He trembled exceedingly, supported himself on his sword, and appeared to have much ado to retain his self-possession. He bowed to the audience several times, gracefully, and like a young gentleman of education. He gained his composure wonderfully, for in ten minutes he was so far recovered, that one would have supposed him to have been accustomed to the boards from his cradle. His voice is altogether puerile; his appearance that of a well-made genteel youth of eighteen. His speech, 'My name is Norval,' he hurried, and spoke as though he had a cold, or was pressing his finger against his nose. His action, on the whole, better than could have been expected from a novice—I may say, in many instances graceful. He made no points; and copied your manner in attitude as much as possible. The particular applause bestowed was only in two instances, when he imitated your voice and style; and his exit in the fourth act, with the words, 'Then let yon false Glenalvon beware of me,' bordered upon the extreme of ludicrous. My conclusion is, that it was just such a performance as would have been highly creditable to a schoolboy acting in conjunction with his companions, for the amusement of their parents on a breaking-up day, and nothing beyond this. After the play he was called, and appeared, led on by

Wallack, and bowed gracefully to all parts of the house. So much confidence had he by this time acquired, that he smiled, and smiled again, as though the laurelled crown were already on his head. I have given you as near a report as is in my power; and I will add, that, even with this well-mustered audience, he would have left the stage for ever, but for the name he bore. He will draw one or two more good houses, and then, I fear, sink into nothingness. Though your son has, I suspect, completely failed to make a great, or even a good actor, the name of Kean will be handed down to posterity, as long as Shakespeare's play of 'Othello' is remembered."

The youthful actor lingered at Drury Lane through the season of 1827-8, occasionally repeating the character of *Norval*, varied by *Selim*, in "Barbarossa," *Frederick*, in "Lovers' Vows," and *Lothaire*, in Monk Lewis's tragedy of "Adelgitha," which last was revived when Mrs. Duff, an American actress, made her first appearance. The houses had ceased to be crowded; his attraction dwindled to nothing; the audience grew cold in their applause. The papers, whenever they condescended to notice him, continued their censure; and, at length, almost heart-broken, he left London for the provinces, that he might have a better opportunity of obtaining the constant practice he so much required.

On the 20th of April, 1828, Charles Kean presented himself to his warm-hearted countrymen, in Dublin, as *Young Norval*, and met with the cordial reception which might have been anticipated. His father had ever been one of their especial favourites; and they remembered, with gratitude, how in 1822 he had given the proceeds of his benefit to relieve their starving peasantry. The humour of the Dublin gallery has long been proverbial; but latterly it has received heavy checks from the

“exodus” and the temperance movement. To fun succeeded propriety, the police, politics, and poverty—poverty of wit engendered by vacuity of purse. Nothing checks the play of imagination more effectually than empty pockets. In 1827, there was yet fun enough left amongst the merry Olympians of the Irish capital, to astonish and amuse a stranger. No sooner had the play terminated, on Charles Kean’s opening night, than he was unanimously demanded; and having, under similar circumstances in London, merely made a silent bow and retired, he naturally thought the same pantomimic acknowledgment would pass muster elsewhere. Most unexpectedly, he was greeted by a general demand for “a speech.” Completely taken by surprise, he hummed and hawed for a moment or two; then endeavoured to look grateful, placed his hand on his breast, and stammered out a few incoherent sentences, nearly as intelligible as the following:—“Ladies and Gentlemen, I am deeply sensible of your being quite unprepared—no, I don’t mean that—I mean, of my being quite unprepared—overwhelming kindness—incapable of thanks—totally unmerited—never to be effaced—when time shall be no more.” Here a friendly auditor cried out, “That will do, Charley; go home to your mother;” which produced a universal burst of approbation, during which he bowed himself off. As he disappeared at the wing, and the applause was dying away, a stentorian shout arose of “Three cheers for Charles Kean’s speech!” which was taken up with overpowering effect.

A volume might be filled with characteristic anecdotes of the Dublin gallery. Perhaps the introduction of two or three may not be considered irrelevant.

On an occasion when the gods were overcrowded on a benefit night, a loud clamour arose for relief, or more accommodation. After becoming diplomatic delay, the

tardy manager appeared, and addressed them with the usual formula, "What is your pleasure?" "None at all!" roared out a dozen at once; "but a d—d sight of pain, for we're all smothering here."

A new piece by Power had not made a very successful impression; however, as usual, he was vociferously called for at the close, and announced it for repetition with the customary plaudits. As he was retiring, an anxious admirer in the gallery called out, in a confidential tone, "Tyrone, a word in private—don't take that for your benefit!"

In those days they had an indirect mode of *hinting* opinions, which they considered less personal than overt hostility. As thus: if Cobham was acting one of Warde's characters, in Warde's absence, after what he intended for a great effect, they would cry, "A clap for Warde!" in that particular speech, and *vice versâ*. If a new piece bored them, they would demand "A groan for the performance *ginirally*!" or tell the actors to "cut it short;" or fall back upon their never-complied-with cry for "Garry-Owen!" a tune which has been a bone of contention between the audience and the management ever since the memorable "races of Castlebar," in 1798. Mrs. Siddons was once interrupted in one of her greatest scenes by a vociferous demand for this same "Garry-Owen." She was utterly unconscious of what it meant; but, anxious to gratify the "celestials," if possible, she paused, and asked solemnly, "What is Garry-Owen? Is it anything that I can do for you?"

There was an old actor at the Dublin Theatre, still living in 1825, named Michael Fullam, who died on the stage during the following year. He had outlived his powers, and was on very familiar terms with the galleries, who, knowing the tetchiness of his temper, perpetually tried to excite him, by shouting, "Speak up!"

a favourite practice of theirs from time immemorial, and a natural one enough, when people have paid their money to hear, and the actors are mysterious. "Arrah, then, Mick Fullam, the divil a word can we hear! Speak up, ould boy!" The first time he would reply, sharply, but without halting in the scene, "I can't." If the call was repeated a second time: "I won't," angrily. If a third time: "Be quiet, fools!" in a burst of indignant reproof. Then ensued a roar of laughter, in which the whole house joined; and, by-and-by, a *da capo* of the same composition.

This call was once urgently addressed to John Kemble, during his performance of the philosophic Prince of Denmark. Finding it impossible to comply, as his asthmatic tendency always compelled him to husband his lungs, he came forward at once, and said, "Gentlemen of the gallery, I can't *speake up*; but if you won't speak at all, you'll hear perfectly every word I say."

On the first night of a new play by Sheridan Knowles, not many seasons ago, a heavy explanatory scene was "dragging its slow length along," between two still heavier actors, who had no effects to produce, and were unable to elicit them if they had. The audience were evidently tired, though patient from respect to the name of the author, and now and then relieved themselves by an expressive yawn. There happened to be a momentary pause, when a voice from one of the gallery benches called out, in parliamentary cadence, "I move that this debate be adjourned to this day six months." This sally woke up the house, and prepared them to enjoy the more telling scenes which were about to follow. Every public has its own particular mode of expressing satisfaction or disgust, the usual symbols being applause or hissing, and sometimes

general somnolency. The latter is the most fatal. "You see they don't hiss," said a disciple of Voltaire to the great master, who had accompanied his pupil to witness the expected condemnation of his first tragedy, which the cynical wit had confidently predicted,—“you are mistaken for once, there is not a single hiss.” “Not at present,” replied Voltaire, “for they are all asleep.”

A troublesome customer in a thin pit, once adopted a strange mode of vindicating independent opinion. He amused himself and disturbed the rest of the audience, by lying nearly at full length, and hissing and applauding every speech from every actor, at the same time. After a desperate struggle he was removed to the police-office, and when interrogated by the local authorities as to why he had thus interrupted the performance, he said, “he didn't know, he meant no offence; but he had always understood that any one who paid his money in a theatre had a right to hiss or applaud according as he pleased; and he thought the fairest way of exercising his privilege was to keep on doing both together.”

It is amazing what the public will sometimes endure without anger, from favourite performers, when they are either taken by surprise, or the good-humoured vein predominates. George Frederic Cooke told the people of Liverpool to their teeth that they were a disgrace to humanity, and that every stone in their city was cemented by human blood—a figurative mode of conveying that their commercial prosperity sprang from encouraging the slave trade. They saw that he laboured under his “old complaint,” and forgave the actor while they pitied the man. At Washington, in America, when the President had come expressly to see him in “Richard the Third,” he flatly refused to commence his character, or act before the “King of the Yankee Doodles,” as he called him, until the band had

played "God save the King," in addition to their own national air. And in this extravagance the stiff republicans actually indulged him! During Elliston's management of the Surrey Theatre, a very poor play was one night unequivocally condemned. He rushed from his dressing-room on the stage, under a tempest of disapprobation, and when silence was with difficulty restored, exclaimed, with a face of bewildered astonishment, "I thought I heard a hiss—unusual sound! Ladies and gentlemen, you are under a very lamentable mistake here. I can assure you (and I think you will allow my opinion is worth something) this is a most excellent piece, and so you will find out when you exercise your unbiassed judgment, and have seen it three or four times. A British audience invariably gives fair play. With your kind permission, therefore, I shall announce the new drama for every evening until further notice." This address was received without a dissentient voice, and procured for the doomed play a long and successful run.

But the climax of public endurance occurred with Edmund Kean, at the Victoria, formerly the Cobourg, on the Surrey side of the water. He had been tempted into the engagement by the large terms of 50*l.* per night. He opened in "Richard the Third" to an enormous house, and all passed off with great effect. On the second night he appeared as *Othello*, on which occasion *Iago* was personated by Cobham, a prodigious Victoria favourite. The house was crowded as before, but noisy and inattentive. There were nearly twelve hundred persons in a gallery measured for about half the number. The best speeches in the most striking scenes were marred by such unclassical expletives and interruptions as a Cobourg audience were given to dispense, in those days with more freedom than politeness

—by the incessant popping of ginger-beer bottles, and by yells of “Bravo, Cobham!” whenever Kean elicited his most brilliant points. The great tragedian felt disconcerted, and by the time the curtain fell, he overflowed with indignation, a little heightened by copious libations of brandy and water. He was then loudly called for, and after a considerable delay came forward, enveloped in his cloak, his face still smirched, not more than half cleansed from the dingy complexion of the Moor, and his eyes emitting flashes as bright and deadly as forked lightning. He planted himself in the centre of the stage, near the footlights, and demanded, with laconic abruptness, “What do you want?” There was a moment’s interval of surprise, when, “You! you!” was reiterated from many voices. “Well, then, I am here.” Another short pause, and he proceeded: “I have acted in every theatre in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, I have acted in all the principal theatres throughout the United States of America, but in my life I never acted to such a set of ignorant, unmitigated brutes as I now see before me.” So saying, he folded his mantle majestically, made a slight, contemptuous obeisance, and stalked off, with the dignity of an offended lion. The actors, carpenters, and property men, who listened to this harangue, stood aghast, evidently expecting that the house would be torn down. An awful silence ensued for a moment or two like the gathering storm before the tempest, when suddenly a thought of deadly retaliation suggested itself, and pent-up vengeance burst out in one simultaneous shout of, “Cobham! Cobham!” Cobham, who was evidently in waiting at the wing, rushed forth at once, bowed reverentially, placed his hand on his heart again and again, and pantomimed emotion and gratitude after the prescribed rules. When the thunders of applau-

subsided, he delivered himself as follows:—"Ladies and gentlemen, this is unquestionably the proudest moment of my life. I cannot give utterance to my feelings; but to the latest hour of my existence I shall cherish the remembrance of the honour conferred upon me by one of the most distinguished, liberal, and enlightened audiences I ever had the pleasure of addressing."

During the course of Charles Kean's first provincial tour, he found himself, while fulfilling an engagement at Glasgow, in close proximity to his father, who was then enjoying a term of relaxation in a cottage he had built in the Isle of Bute. Notwithstanding their estrangement, the heart of the son yearned towards his parent, and he made an overture, through a third person, to pay him a visit. The proposal met with a ready assent, and his reception was more cordial than he anticipated. Little allusion was made to the past, and a temporary reconciliation took place. This led to a proposition from the elder Kean to act one night in the Glasgow theatre for his son's benefit, on the 1st of October, 1828—by singular coincidence, the anniversary of his first appearance in London. They appeared as *Brutus* and *Titus*, in Howard Payne's tragedy of "Brutus." The house, as might be anticipated under such circumstances, presented a complete overflow, the receipts amounting to nearly £300. The strong interest of the play, combined with the natural acting of father and son, completely subdued the audience. They sat suffused in tears during the last pathetic interview, until *Brutus*, overpowered by his emotions, falls on the neck of *Titus*, exclaiming in a burst of agony, "Embrace thy wretched father;" when they broke forth into the relief of loud and prolonged peals of approbation. Edmund Kean then whispered in his son's ear,

"Charley, we are doing the trick." This may appear strange and inconsistent, perhaps unnatural, to those who persuade themselves that the accomplished actor must of necessity feel, at the moment, the full influence of the passion he is so eloquently expressing. Garrick may be cited as an eminent instance to the contrary. His superiority over Barry in *Lear* consisted chiefly in his power of simulating tears and sobs without suffering them to impede his utterance, a perfection of art which his rival could never attain, from yielding too much to natural emotion. An enthusiastic admirer of Talma once said to him, "You must be deeply affected to produce such painful impressions on your audiences. How intensely you identify yourself with every character you represent." His reply embraced a lecture on his art. "Acting," said he, "is a complete paradox;" we must possess the power of strong feeling or we could never command and carry with us the sympathy of a mixed public in a crowded theatre; but we must at the same time control our own sensations on the stage, for their indulgence would enfeeble execution. The skilful actor calculates his effects beforehand. He never improvises a burst of passion or an explosion of grief. Everything that he does is the result of pre-arrangement and fore-thought. The agony which appears instantaneous, the joy that seems to gush forth involuntarily, the tone of the voice, the gesture, the look, which pass for sudden inspiration, have been rehearsed a hundred times. On the other hand a dull, composed, phlegmatic nature, can never make a great actor. He who loves his profession and expects to excel in it, must study from himself, and compare his own proved sensations under grief, happiness, disappointment, loss, acquisition, anger, pain, pleasure, and all the ordinary variations of human events and feelings, with

the imaginary emotions of the character he is supposed to represent." "Not long ago," he added, "I was playing in 'Misanthropy and Repentance' with an admirable actress. Her natural and affecting manner, deeply studied nevertheless, quite overpowered me. She perceived and rejoiced in her triumph, but whispered to me, 'Recover yourself, Talma; you are excited.'* Had I not listened to the caution, my voice would have failed, the words would have escaped my memory, my gesticulations would have become unmeaning, and the whole effect would have dwindled into insignificance. No, believe me, we are not nature, but art producing nature, and in the excellence of our imitation lies the consummation of skill."

We have recorded the substance of similar opinions as expressed by Edmund Kean in more than one conversation. He and Talma are great authorities on the art which they so eminently illustrated, although in this point both dissent from Horace, who, speaking poetically, says, "You must first weep yourself if you wish to excite compassion in others."

"Si, vis me flere, dolendum est
Primùm ipsi tibi."

"Do you believe, Sir," said Boswell to Dr. Johnson, "that Garrick, as he says himself, is so carried away by artistic enthusiasm that he actually fancies he is *Richard*

* Charles Young related to Campbell the poet, a similar effect produced upon him by Mrs. Siddons, in the last scene of the "Gamester," when as a young actor he was performing with her in that play in Edinburgh. He was so carried away by her intensity that he totally forgot his part, until she whispered to him in a low tone; "Mr. Young, recollect yourself." Elliston really persuaded himself that he was George IV., when he personated that monarch in the pageant of the Coronation. As he crossed the platform along the front of the pit, he invariably paused, and extending his hands benignly, said to the audience, "Bless you, my people!"

the Third, every time he performs the character?" "No, Sir," replied the Leviathan, "David talks nonsense, and he knows it. If such a metamorphosis were possible, he would deserve the penalty of hanging every time it occurs." The philosopher knew his man; and when Garrick rebuked him for talking loud with his friends during the performance, alleging that it disturbed his tragedy feelings, he replied with a laugh, "Pooh, pooh, Davy; Punch has no feelings."

But although Dr. Johnson delighted in teasing Garrick, by pretending to undervalue the actor's art, and spoke slightly of him in conversation with others, he never would suffer any one else to do so in his presence. "If I choose to decry David, Sir, is that any reason why I should suffer you to do so?" This was his stern rebuke to more than one "triton of the minnows" who thought to curry favour with him by echoing his sentiments. When Garrick died, Dr. Johnson caused it to be conveyed to his widow that, if she expressed a wish to that effect, he would undertake the editorship of the works, and also write a memoir of his deceased friend. The lady, from whatever cause, remained silent, and the biography, which, in beauty of composition, and literary value, might have rivalled the life of Savage, or Dryden, or Milton, was doomed to execution by the hands of Tom Davies and Arthur Murphy.

An anecdote has escaped the diligence of Boswell, which may be found in a note to Sir W. Forbes's "Life of Beattie." At Garrick's funeral, which moved in ostentatious display, attended by much that was dignified in rank, wealth, and literature, from his residence in the Adelphi to Westminster Abbey, Dr. Johnson rode in the same coach with Sir William Jones, to whom, and the rest of his companions, he talked incessantly, as was his habit; his theme being an uninterrupted

eulogium on the departed actor, both in his public and private capacity. "Garrick," said he, "to my knowledge, gave away more money than any man in England, with the same means. He was proud of his profession, and had a right to be so. Each owed much to the other. His profession made him rich, and he made his profession respectable."

Actors, naturally enough, have an exalted idea of their own calling. But in this harmless vanity they are fully emulated by professors of the kindred arts. Baron, the great French tragedian, said "a tragic actor ought to be born amongst princes, and nursed on the laps of queens." The sentence is well rounded, and reads with an imposing air. Of him, the following hyperbole is gravely recorded. In pronouncing the two lines—

" Et dans le même moment par une action sévère,
Je l'ai vu *rougir* de honte, et *pallir* de colère ;

his panegyrist tells us that as he uttered the words *rougir* and *pallir*, his face alternately grew red and white. This was suiting "the action to the word" to an extent that Shakespeare never contemplated—a muscular trickery quite impossible, and utterly absurd if it could be contrived. The actor is merely repeating of another what he is by no means supposed to feel in his own person. This flight may stand side by side with the still higher one of a living theatrical critic, Alison, who, in one of his volumes, mentions that Garrick so studiously copied nature, that he acted *King Lear* on *crutches*, but threw them away to give more complete effect to the *great scene*. Where on earth did the ingenious essayist and historian find his authority for this extravagance? We are told by many contemporaries that Garrick used a *stick* in acting *Lear*, such as is carried to this day by *Shylock*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, and

other elderly characters ; and for which Edmund Kean, and afterwards Macready, substituted a Saxon sceptre, or hunting-spear. When he came to the curse, if this is what is implied by the *great scene*, he dashed down this stick, with his cap, and clasped his hands convulsively together, as he fell on his knees in the agony of passion. Henderson, John Kemble, and Young, who followed in succession, adopted the same stage business, which appears to have descended lineally from Betterton, through Booth and Quin, to Barry and Garrick.

Davies' "Life of Garrick" is little more than a dull register—a mere record of performances, unenlivened by incident or profitable reflection. Murphy's consists of little more than the margin. Galt's is a meagre sketch ; well supplied with erroneous particulars, and, if possible, of less value than Murphy's. Compilations of personal anecdotes are always popular and entertaining, but not of necessity authentic. Sometimes they are confounded, or misapplied, or break down under the most conclusive of all evidences, when substantiated—an *alibi*. Your professed anecdote hunter is a dangerous individual to depend on, or quote from. He is, in fact, often a clap-trap actor, ready at any time to yield up the sense for the applause, or to dally with severe truth for the sake of a brilliant period, or an epigrammatic point. Let us look for an instance or two, by way of illustration. How often have we read that when the great Duke of Marlborough was observed to shed tears at the imaginary woes of *Indiana*, in Sir Richard Steele's weeping comedy of the "Conscious Lovers," it was remarked by the lookers on that "he would fight none the worse for that." Now, how stands the fact? The case falls through on an *alibi*. The illustrious warrior died a few months before the play was produced, and was thus clearly otherwise engaged ; added to which, his

fighting days were over long before his death, and the last years of his existence passed in strict domestic privacy, clouded by mental prostration.

Ireland, the biographer of Henderson, says, that in the winter of 1780, he appeared at Covent Garden as *Sir John Brute*; but Mr. Garrick observed, "it was the city Sir John, for egad he had neither the air nor the manner of the rake of fashion." The anecdote slays itself, for Garrick died on the 20th of January, 1779, and thereby was incapacitated from giving an opinion on anybody's acting in the winter of the following year. Another clear case of *alibi*. Lord Byron sings in "*Childe Harold*," in imperishable verse, how the so-called Convention of Cintra was negotiated in the palace of the Marquis of Marialva, at that place; and the entertaining author of the "*Diary of an Invalid*," improving on the story, detected on the table the stains of ink spilt by Junot on that occasion. The more accurate Napier (*Peninsular War*) destroys both fables, by showing to a demonstration that the preliminaries, details, and all particulars connected with the treaty, were discussed and arranged at a distance of twenty miles from Cintra, and had no more connexion with the abode of the Marquis of Marialva than with the imaginary Promontory of Noses, to which the traveller, on the dun-coloured mule, with the huge proboscis, was bound, in Sterne's indecent rhapsody.

The Italian chronicler, Gregorio Leti, who came to reside in England during the reign of Charles II., soon gave out that he intended to employ himself in collecting materials for an anecdotal history of the reign of the merry monarch. The subject was fertile in incident, but likely to be very objectionable in substance. The King, observing him at one of the levées, asked him how his work went on. "I understand," said his Majesty, "that

you intend to deal largely in anecdotes of the English court; take care there be no offence." "Sire," answered the Italian, "I will do what I can, and will be as careful as possible; but if a man were as wise as Solomon, he could hardly publish historical anecdotes without giving *some* offence." "Why, then," retorted Charles, "do you copy the wisdom of Solomon; write proverbs, and leave history and anecdotes alone." It would have been well for Leti had he followed this sound advice from one of whom Rochester has recorded in a well-known epigram, that "he never *said* a foolish thing." But he followed his own bent instead, and published his book under the title of "Teatro Britannico." It gave outrageous umbrage in certain high quarters, and raised such a clamour about his ears, that he was ordered to quit the kingdom, which he forthwith did, and betook himself to Amsterdam, where he died in 1701.

This same Gregorio Leti, however defective as a compiler of annals or biography, is entitled to the praise of a most industrious labourer, in more fields than one. He boasted that for twenty consecutive years, without intermission, he presented the world annually with a child and a volume. As a writer of history, his authority is naught. His works of this class are too much overloaded with error and fiction to rank above ingenious romances. But many of his anecdotes are infinitely racy and amusing. In all probability they are founded on truth, which may account for their being so ill-received. All traders in anecdotes, particularly personal "Ana," should keep a constant eye on the caution which Leti disregarded.

Garrick, with every allowance for his great merit, was undoubtedly what is called a lucky man. Life ran smoothly with him, for success was his constant companion. He suffered much in his latter days from more

than one painful infirmity; and his retirement in affluence and credit was cut short by the hand of death in three years, and at by no means an advanced age. He began to accumulate the fortune at an early period, which went on continually increasing. His favour with the public never declined; and though he was always in dread of rivals, none ever shook his acknowledged supremacy. His labour was comparatively light, and his performances far less numerous than the drudgery of the modern stage imposes on a leading actor and manager. From thirty to forty comprised the maximum during an average of many seasons. He made two professional visits to Dublin before his purchase of a share in Drury Lane; but, with these exceptions, he never performed in any theatre out of London, after his fame was securely established. He was happy in his domestic life, although not blessed with children. He had his enemies and waspish detractors in common with all other men of talent. These annoyed him more than he should have permitted. Macklin, from personal pique, both wrote and spoke of him disparagingly; and Macklin, in so doing, was ungrateful as well as spiteful. Tate Wilkinson records a specimen of his colloquial conversation, too coarse and vulgar for the pages of an otherwise respectable book; and Kenrick, whose hand, like Ishmael's, was against everybody, provoked him by groundless insinuations, which were unworthy of notice. He had one or two riots in the theatre during a management of twenty-eight years, and sundry squabbles with the Cibber and the Clive. But his term of existence was nearly all sunshine, darkened only by passing clouds. Few who live by a profession have been so uniformly fortunate. That he deserved his good fortune is equally certain. With many trifling faults, such as vanity, and love of adulation, inseparable from his position, Garrick

was a kind-hearted, charitable man, an affectionate husband and relative, a firm friend, and far from an implacable enemy. As an actor, he stands unrivalled in the wide scope of his versatility. Others may have equalled, or even excelled him in particular characters or passages, but his range was more extensive than that of any individual who either went before or came after him. He was, perhaps, greater in comedy than in tragedy; but of the two leading divisions of the dramatic art, it is easier to obtain a high degree in the college of Thalia than in that of Melpomene.

CHAPTER X.

FALL OF THE BRUNSWICK THEATRE—LAMENTABLE LOSS OF LIFE, AND MANY SEVERE CASUALTIES—RELIGIOUS INFERENCES—CHARLES KEAN RETURNS TO DRURY LANE—APPEARS IN ROMEO—DISCOURAGEMENT OF THE PAPERS, AND COLDNESS OF THE PUBLIC—VISITS THE COUNTRY AGAIN, AND ACTS WITH HIS FATHER IN DUBLIN AND CORK—AT THE HAYMARKET IN THE AUTUMN OF 1829—SUCCESS IN SIR EDWARD MORTIMER—THE PRESS PRAISE HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME—VISITS AMSTERDAM AND THE HAGUE—THE MANAGER LEAVES THE COMPANY TO SHIFT FOR THEMSELVES—THEY ARE EXTRICATED BY A BENEFIT—CHARLES KEAN'S FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA IN 1830—HIS WARM RECEPTION AND SUCCESS—DEATH OF ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON—HIS FIRST GREAT BENEFIT AT THE OPERA HOUSE—HIS EXTRAVAGANT PROPENSITIES—EMBARRASSED AFFAIRS OF COVENT GARDEN THEATRE—APPEARANCE OF MISS FANNY KEMBLE—SHE RETRIEVES THE PROPERTY FROM BANKRUPTCY.

ON the 28th of February, 1828, a lamentable event occurred in the east end of London, by the falling in of the iron roof of the New Brunswick Theatre, erected on the site of the old Royalty, which had been burnt down in 1827. This occurred, most providentially, in the daytime, about half-an-hour previous to a rehearsal, when there were comparatively few persons within the building. Eleven dead bodies were dug out of the ruins, and twenty-two still living sufferers; more than one of whom died afterwards in hospital of the injuries they had received. Had this catastrophe taken place at night, during the performance, it is awful to think of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, that would have been immolated. Some overheated pictists, who are ever ready to "saddle with a judgment" (as Thwackum dealt with Square) whatever they happen to disap-

prove, loudly declared this accident to be a manifest instance of Divine anger, excited by the horrible profligacy and impiety of the stage. Similar sentences are pronounced without scruple, whenever any sudden calamity befalls a theatre or an actor. The Rev. John Duncan, Rector of Wimborne Minster, Dorset, in a treatise entitled "The Lawfulness of the Stage Inquired Into," published in 1787, quotes the burning of the great theatre at Amsterdam, while the audience were in it,—the Burwell Tragedy in 1727, when eighty persons were burned in a barn, while looking at a puppet-show—and a terrible fire in Wapping, by a pitch-kettle boiling over, all hands belonging to the yard having run into the street to see a dancing bear. He sums up as follows:—"If God had no hand in any of these evils, it is evident he had none in preventing them." It is certainly not easy to parry this mode of reasoning, which affords a specimen of the antithetical style, sufficiently wide to embrace all imaginable casualties.

When Covent Garden and Drury Lane were burnt in 1808 and 1809—when Palmer died on the stage at Liverpool, and Cummins at York,—on these and similar occasions, homilies were delivered and pamphlets printed, all declaring in plain terms that every case was "a judgment from Heaven!" When the Brunswick Theatre fell, a sermon was actually preached in the ruins before all the sufferers were removed or the extent of the mischief ascertained. But accidents such as these have happened to churches and chapels dedicated to holy worship, to ministers in the exercise of their sacred office, and to individuals at their private devotions. It would be difficult to find any voice sufficiently bold or blasphemous to say, that the wrath of offended Heaven speaks in these instances also; or to deduce from thence, arguments against preaching or

praying. Yet, on what ground shall such conclusions be demanded in the one case and denied in the other? What says Minutius Felix, in an early defence of Christianity?—"Fulmina passim cadunt; sine delectu tangunt loca sacra et profana; homines noxios feriunt, sæpe et religiosos." * Thunderbolts fall indifferently; they light upon places profane and sacred without any choice; they strike good men and bad alike. Occurrences of sudden death or misfortune are powerful arguments to arouse the thoughtless to reflection, or the profligate to repentance; for such purposes we may suppose them to be intended, but we have no warrant to make arbitrary distinctions, or to build conclusions founded on bigotry or prejudice.

A letter from Mr. Percy Farren, stage-manager of the Brunswick Theatre, printed with the farce called "An Uncle Too Many," contains some interesting particulars relative to the sudden destruction of the building. He says:—"Previously to relating my share in the occurrences of that memorable morning, I must most distinctly state that, for myself, I never apprehended the slightest insecurity, nor did I ever hear an opinion that led to such a belief in others. It was about half-past eleven o'clock, after I had been for some time conversing with Mr. Maurice, the proprietor, in the front of his private box, on the opposite prompt side of the stage, upon the subject of some theatrical arrangements, that our attention was arrested by an almost indescribable discordant sound, which must have been heard in every corner of the building, and continued for several seconds. Upon looking upwards, whence it seemed to proceed, I observed the lustre falling. My poor friend rushed towards the centre of the stage, apparently to ascertain the cause of alarm, whilst I, almost without a

* Minutius Felix, Octav. p. 14. Edit. Oxon. 1631.

consciousness of what I did, sprang into the box, and supported myself by the outward pillar of the proscenium. In an instant, the whole fabric fell before me with an awful crash ; the iron roof buried all beneath it, and the sky was entirely open to my view. So complete appeared the work of death and destruction around me, that for some time I considered myself the only survivor of this fearful ruin, until, through the cloud of dust, I distinguished Mrs. Vaughan's daughter, Miss Yates, severely wounded in the head, and heard her imploring me to save her. With some difficulty I succeeded in rescuing her from her perilous situation, and, on placing her by my side in the box, urged her grateful acknowledgments to the Almighty for her preservation up to that moment. The exact period that we remained in this precarious safety, every moment expecting destruction, I cannot conjecture : but my fervent gratitude may be conceived, when I at length saw some carpenters and other workmen climbing wounded and bleeding through the rubbish. Upon their recognizing me, I expressed my joy at their escape with life, and inquired if our danger was yet over. Their replies convinced me of the necessity of instant exertion, and amidst horrors and difficulties, which I shall not attempt to describe, I descended and found myself on my knees at the bottom of the ruins, with Miss Yates locked in my arms. Having recovered from the oppression on my feelings by a violent flood of tears, I was at length enabled to place my interesting charge in a place of safety, and, thank Heaven ! providentially escaped myself without any personal injury. I first informed Mrs. Vaughan of the preservation of her daughter, and then, in a state of mind more easily conceived than described, went to inform my brothers of my own miraculous rescue. On my return to the scene

of terror I learned the confirmation of my worst fears in the irreparable loss of my most esteemed friend Mr. Maurice, and of the many others who died with him. At the moment when the calamity occurred I was too horror-struck, and my mind too entirely occupied with my own preservation for me to be competent to speak with any accuracy of the escape of those who happily, like me, live to be grateful for it. The number of persons then in the theatre I am also unable to state with any confidence; though there certainly could not have been more than from twenty to thirty-five on the stage; and, I should say, scarcely more than the same number in other parts of the building."

Charles Kean resumed his engagement at Drury Lane a few days before the Christmas of 1828. His country tour had given him practice and confidence. On the 15th of December, a young lady of great promise (a pupil of Mrs. St. Ledger), named Phillips, was announced as a first appearance in *Juliet*. Price, the manager, thought that it would be injudicious to risk the appearance of two novices on the same night; and intimated to the expectant *Romeo* that a more experienced hand must be selected for the first performance, but that he should take his place on the second. The mortification was great, but inevitable; so nothing remained but to digest it, and feed on hope. The chosen Montague was of the genus *respectable*, a term hateful to the actor to whom it is applied, but popular with some critics, who thereby think they express considerable excellence. He was neither youthful, nor fascinating, nor elegant, but he was *safe*; and nothing more was required or expected. Kean sat in the front of the house, and looked on with interest, and something of the natural jealousy which arose from seeing his post occupied by another. He marked, with inward satisfaction, that the slaying of

Tybalt passed off without notice. It was tame and business-like. He, however, expected to produce a great point here, by rapid, graceful fencing, and a striking attitude. On that day week he came to the trial. When he rushed furiously on *Tybalt*, and after two or three tremendous thrusts, stood bewildered over his fallen enemy, the house thundered down their plaudits, and the actor's heart beat high with exultation. On the following morning an influential paper, speaking in general condemnation of Mr. Kean, junior, observed of this particular passage, that Mr. — would have been a much more effective representative of *Romeo*, judging by the immense applause he received in the fall and death of such a comparatively inferior part as *Tybalt*. On Boxing-night, as it is called, "Lover's Vows" was revived, when Miss Ellen Tree, the future Mrs. C. Kean, acted *Amelia Wildenhaim*; this being the first time of their meeting together on the stage.

Fortune was not yet prepared to smile on Charles Kean's efforts. The press continued to discourage, and the public neglected him. He remained a member of the company, but his services were seldom required. He was evidently of no importance to the management, and felt that he was losing his own time. He, therefore, took the first opportunity of again visiting the provinces, for the sake of hard study and frequent practice. In the course of the summer he acted with his father in Dublin and Cork, appearing as *Titus, Bassanio, Wellborn, Iago, Icilius*, and *Macduff*.

In October, 1829, he accepted an offer from Mr. Morris of the Haymarket Theatre, to play six nights, during the concluding fortnight of the season, for which he was to receive 20*l*. He commenced as *Reuben Glenroy*; acted *Romeo* twice to Miss F. H. Kelly's *Juliet*; *Frederick*, in "Lovers' Vows;" and *Sir Edward Mortimer* in the

“Iron Chest.” For the first time he felt that he had succeeded. The latter play was repeated on the closing night of the season, with increased effect and attraction. The papers afforded him positive praise. He could scarcely believe it real.

Mr. Morris was so struck with the effect he produced in *Sir Edward Mortimer*, that he offered to engage him permanently for such parts in heavy tragedy as *Richard* and *Macbeth*, telling him that he would find his true bent in that line. Charles Kean, with sound judgment, declined the tempting offer, and replied to the manager’s proposal that, though such was his ambition, he knew that he required more experience before he could encounter the risk.

During the early part of 1830, he visited Amsterdam and the Hague, with an English company, under the management of an adventurer named Aubrey; being tempted by an offer of 20*l.* per week, which his employer evidently had no intention of paying, and of which, with the exception of a few pounds at the commencement, he never received a penny. After a short experiment of about three weeks, Aubrey decamped, leaving his actors without funds, and in rather an awkward predicament, to shift for themselves. As their only resource, they announced a general benefit at Amsterdam, to which the King of Holland contributed by a handsome present. The receipts were doled out in due proportion, and the modicum allotted to Charles Kean enabled him to return to England, by way of Calais. He now began to feel his strength; his powers were called forth by exercise; and he had obtained a mastery over the mechanical part of his profession—a knowledge of “stage business,” which severe apprenticeship only can accomplish. He therefore determined to try his fortune in America; and, accordingly, crossed the Atlantic, and appeared at the

Park Theatre, New York, as *Richard the Third*, in the early part of September, 1830.

The name of Kean was already well known to our transatlantic descendants ; not only by the voice of fame, but by the two visits of his father, who had produced a most powerful and permanent impression throughout the United States. They were prepared to greet the son with warm cordiality. His reception was all he could desire. Everywhere he attracted numerous audiences, and gained applause, with a solid accompaniment of dollars. His hopes revived in proportion. It was no small triumph for a lad, still under twenty, to establish an enduring American reputation, in such characters as *Richard the Third*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*.

Some few years later, at a public dinner in Waterford, he spoke thus of the encouragement which hailed him on his first visit to America :—

“Thrown before the public by untoward circumstances, at the early age of sixteen and a-half, encompassed by many difficulties, friendless, and untutored, the efforts of my boyhood were criticised in so severe and spirit-crushing a strain, as almost to unnerve my energies, and drive me despairingly from the stage. The indulgence usually extended to novices was denied to me. I was not permitted to cherish the hope that time and study could ever enable me to correct the faults of youthful inexperience. The very resemblance I bore to my late father was urged against me as an offence, and condemned as being ‘strange and unnatural.’ Sick at heart, I left my home and sought the shores of America. To the generous inhabitants of that far land I am indebted for the first ray of success that illumined my clouded career.”

During Charles Kean's absence in America, an actor

of great and varied abilities, Robert William Elliston, "shuffled off this mortal coil." He died July the 7th, 1831, aged fifty-seven, and was buried on the 15th of the same month, at St. John's Church, Waterloo Road. At the time of his decease, he was manager of the Surrey Theatre, where he made his last appearance as *Sheva*, on the 24th of June. He was announced in the bills for *Megrim*, on the 28th, but his rapid illness interfered, and the public saw him no more.

Elliston, in his best days, was a most fascinating, brilliant performer, with powers nearly as universal as those of Garrick. Perhaps this universality injured his fame. His comedy was superior to his tragedy, although he succeeded in the arduous character of *Sir Edward Mortimer*, in which John Kemble had signally failed. His early reputation, like that of Henderson and Mrs. Siddons, was won in Bath. During the height of his popularity he was engaged in London, and through a part of the same season, acted in both places, running backwards and forwards as he was wanted. This rapidity of locomotion, in the old days of heavy coaches, obtained for him the name of the "Telegraph," or "Fortnightly Actor." But the arrangement was found to be inconvenient as well as unprofitable to all parties, and was soon abandoned.

Having performed at the Haymarket for several seasons during the summer, he at length appeared at Drury Lane, to contest supremacy with Kemble, as *Rolla*, in "Pizarro;" being engaged to assume the leading line in both departments of the drama. His success was so great that he took his first benefit at the Opera House—Drury Lane not being large enough to accommodate the expected overflow. The house was literally carried by assault. At every entrance the rush was so overwhelming that the door-keepers, money-takers, and

assistants, were swept before it, and a scene of confusion ensued, not easy to describe or understand. Fortunately no accident occurred. An address was made from the stage by the actor, and hats were handed round to collect the price of admission from those who had been forced in without the option of disbursement. The receipts reached 600*l.*; but if all the places occupied had been fairly paid for, they would have exceeded 1000*l.*, being the largest sum ever levied on the public by any performer on the occasion of his benefit.

Elliston was the original *Duke Aranza* in the "Honey-moon;" a part exactly suited to him in all its points, and in which he has never been equalled. He had a fine, full-toned voice, and though sometimes inflated and extravagant in tragedy, he delivered a sentiment, or an occasional didactic speech in comedy, with an effect peculiar to himself. Mrs. Inchbald, a professed theatrical critic, engaged to write prefatory notices for an edition of the "British Theatre," says, in her remarks on the "Honey-moon," "Mr. Elliston's *Duke* is most excellent through all his different scenes; and the character requires abilities of so varied and forcible a nature, that to represent him perfectly in all the vicissitudes of his honeymoon is to possess powers of acting equal to the personation of every comic, and almost every tragic hero on the stage." When we consider that this is written of a part that never soars beyond level speaking, of which the leading attributes are ease, elegance, humour, and firmness mingled with affection—but, at the same time, utterly untinged by a scintillation of the terrible passions which rend *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, or *Richard*—we lift up our hands in wonder at the hyperbolical summary, and think what strange judgment it must be that could run into such a ridiculous extreme. You may cull a hundred first-rate *Duke Aranzas* before you reach one passabl

Hamlet, *Shylock*, or *Jaffier*. A criticism delivered on Edmund Kean, when he played the *Duke* in the "Honeymoon," is almost as good as Mrs. Inchbald's. "Well, Tom, how did you like it?" "Oh! it was magnificent: Kean's dancing is glorious itself, by Jupiter!"

Elliston's last appearance at Drury Lane occurred in May, 1826, when he twice performed *Falstaff*, in "King Henry the Fourth." Great expectations were excited which were not realized. He possessed every requisite for the part, and ought to have surpassed Henderson, or any living representative. He rehearsed splendidly, but failed when it came to the acting. Long habits of dissipation had impaired his powers before their legitimate time of decay—for he was then only fifty-two; but he had become careless, vulgarized in style, and slovenly in his delivery of the text of his author. In the same manner he had dilapidated his fortune by an inveterate indulgence in gambling—a vice in itself sufficient to exhaust the treasury of Cræsus down to the most imperceptible residuum. Amongst his best parts, while in his zenith, may be reckoned, *Vapour*, *Captain Absolute*, *Sylvester Daggerwood*, *Walter*, *Sheva*, *Octavian*, *Rolla*, *Fitzharding*, in the "Curfew," *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Young Rapid*, *Dr. Pangloss*, *Rover*, *Ranger*, *Vapid*, *Abednego*, *Bob Handy*, *Tangent*, *Belcour*, the *Three Singles*, *Jeremy Diddler*, *Duke Aranza*, *Felix*, in the "Hunter of the Alps," and *Mercutio*. He failed utterly in *Wolsey* and *Lord Townly*. So did Garrick in *Marplot*, *Gil Blas*, and *Othello*.

Elliston was treated very shabbily by the Drury Lane proprietors, or committee. He laid out many thousands in remodelling and improving the theatre; but because he fell into a small arrear of rent, they kicked him out unceremoniously, for which act of gross injustice, retribution came on them in due course.

It has too often been the destiny of large theatres to become a prey to the Fire King, or to be engulfed in the devouring whirlpool of the Bankruptcy Court. The latter fate had nearly anticipated the former, at Covent Garden, in the year 1829. The newspapers said in August, "The affairs of Covent Garden continue in a bad state. Yesterday the magistrates at Bow Street signed distress warrants for 896*l.* for arrears of parish rates, and the King's Collector is now in possession for assessed taxes, due to the amount of above 600*l.*" Then the ground landlord came in, and the walls were placarded with bills of sale by auction. The hammer of George Robins stood ready elevated, and the "incomparable stock" appeared to be on the very eve of dispersion. The proprietors made a last cogent appeal to the public, and the appeal was responded to. In September new paragraphs appeared, to this effect:—

"It is said that the ruin which would be consequent on the sale of the fine wardrobe, splendid scenery, glasses, chandeliers, and decorations of Covent Garden Theatre, is likely to be averted, by the interference of three or four persons of high rank and consideration."

And again:—

"The subscription for opening Covent Garden Theatre proceeds admirably. Several persons of rank and respectability sent various sums yesterday to the Committee."

"The King's Theatre was thronged to an overflow on Friday, in aid of the Covent Garden subscription fund. The net proceeds amount to 750*l.*"

Charles Kemble, on the 9th of September, wrote to the author of these pages as follows:—

"You will, I know, be delighted to hear that my appeal has been answered with even more success than our most sanguine hopes had anticipated. The stone is set rolling, and, I doubt not, will gather marvellously."

On the 5th of October, the theatre opened, when Miss Fanny Kemble made her first appearance as *Juliet*—her father as *Mercutio*,—and her mother, Mrs. C. Kemble, returning to the stage for that night, to support her daughter,—as *Lady Capulet*. Abbott, in the absence of a better, was specially retained for *Romeo*. At the bottom of the bill it was said,—“Miss Kelly has consented to perform gratuitously for ten nights. Miss Foote has also given her services for ten nights. Mr. T. P. Cooke has offered to act six nights, and Mr. Kean will act three nights gratuitously, on his return to London.”

Miss F. Kemble proved so attractive that she enabled the proprietors of Covent Garden, in a single season, to pay off 13,000*l.* of pressing debt. Her characters were *Juliet*, *Belvidera*, *Euphrasia*, *Mrs. Beverley*, *Portia*, and *Isabella*. The papers were extravagant in her praise, and the public received her with enthusiasm, bordering on affection. The impression that she came forward to save the theatre, and to retrieve the affairs of her father and family, added materially to the interest of her performances. Her talent was extraordinary, and her success well-merited; but it was impossible that at nineteen, without an apprenticeship, she could be either Mrs. Siddons or Miss O'Neill, although there were not wanting over-heated admirers who said she was both.

What somebody christened her *Canova*, in *Juliet*, we always considered a terrible mistake. In the fourth act, when during the soliloquy which precedes her taking the potion, she fancies that she sees the ghost of her cousin *Tybalt*, she ran down from the back of the stage to the right-hand corner of the proscenium, under the stage-box; and there threw herself into an attitude upon one knee as if driving the apparition before her. Even so under the old conventional system, *Macbeth* was accustomed to bully the spirit of the intruding *Banquo* at the

royal feast (the said spirit being usually personated by a stout gentleman), step by step, from O. P. to P. S. In both cases nature was equally forgotten. We recoil from an object of terror instead of rushing madly to grapple with it. But, to redeem the false reading, Fanny Kemble's "*Do it!*" in the "*Hunchback*" was really magnificent.

CHAPTER XI.

RETIREMENT OF MRS. DAVENPORT AND FAWCETT—EASY MANAGEMENT FIFTY YEARS AGO—FAWCETT'S BRUSQUE MANNER AND LITERARY CENSORSHIP—NICOLÒ PAGANINI—HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND AND IRELAND—ANECDOTES AND ECCENTRICITIES OF THE GREAT VIOLINIST—RETIREMENT OF CHARLES YOUNG—SUMMARY OF HIS PRIVATE AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER.

DURING the season of 1829-30, at Covent Garden, Mrs. Davenport and Fawcett took leave of the stage. The lady was an excellent actress in her proper line of comic old women, which she never stepped from, either through vanity or the occasional exigencies of the theatre. She originally acted, as a child, at Bath, when Miss Harvey, as far back as December 21st, 1784. As Mrs. Davenport, she appeared in London, in the character of *Mrs. Hardcastle*, on the 24th of September, 1794. On the 29th of May, 1830, she retired, after thirty-six years of faithful and unremitting service. The last performance was for her own benefit, as the *Nurse* in "Romeo and Juliet."

John Fawcett was the son of an actor who held a situation of minor importance at Drury Lane. At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to a linen-draper, but left the shop clandestinely for the Margate theatre, where he assumed the name of Foote, and commenced a business more congenial to his taste. He afterwards joined Tate Wilkinson in the York circuit, and in 1791, made his bow to a London audience, at Covent Garden, as *Caleb* in "He would be a Soldier." His reputation advanced rapidly by his performances of *Ollapod*, *Dr. Pangloss*,

and *Caleb Quotem*. Volubility and distinctness of utterance were amongst his natural requisites, and these were particularly essential in the above-named parts. There is an admirable portrait of him, by Clint, in the collection of the Garrick Club, as *Captain Copp*, with Charles Kemble as the *King*, in a scene from "Charles II." In this character, which he had played with great success, he bade farewell to the public on the 20th of May, 1830.

Fawcett was the original *Job Thornberry*, in "John Bull," a part which furnished an excellent specimen of his peculiar style. Munden was called to the reading, having been told by Colman that he had measured him to a hair. He expected *Job Thornberry*, and chuckled with delight as the reading proceeded; but great was his indignation when, at the close, *Sir Simon Rochdale* was put into his hand. This he peremptorily refused, and it was then transferred to Blanchard, to whom it proved a valuable step in the ladder of promotion.

The original cast of "John Bull" is worth remembering, as a sample of how plays were acted at Covent Garden under the government of the elder Harris; *Job Thornberry*, Fawcett; *Hon. Tom Shuffleton*, Lewis; *Peregrine*, Cooke; *Dennis Brulgruddery*, Johnstone; *Sir Simon Rochdale*, Blanchard; *Frank Rochdale*, H. Johnston; *Dan*, Emery; *Lord Fitz-Balaam*, Waddy; *Mary Thornberry*, Mrs. Gibbs; *Lady Caroline Braymore*, Mrs. H. Johnston; and *Mrs. Brulgruddery*, Mrs. Davenport. All these were first-rate artists in their respective lines. No single theatre in the present day could produce anything like a parallel. The play, brought out in March, 1803, ran forty-eight nights the first season—an enormous longevity fifty years ago. The name ("John Bull; or, an Englishman's Fireside") was happily chosen at the time, as the whole nation was in arms to resist the threat

of French invasion at the commencement of the war; but the piece contained not the most remote allusion to politics or public affairs.

Cooke said of this comedy (in Dunlap's "Memoirs"), "We got 'John Bull' from Colman, act by act, as he wanted money, but the last act did not come, and Harris refused to make any further advances. At last, necessity drove Colman to make a finish, and he wrote the fifth act in one night, on separate sheets of paper. As he filled one piece after the other, he threw them on the floor, and finishing his liquor, went to bed. Harris, who impatiently expected the conclusion of the play, according to promise, sent Fawcett to Colman, whom he found still in bed. By his direction, Fawcett picked up the scraps, and brought them to the theatre." An improvement on this story is told of Sheridan and "Pizarro." It has been said, that the last act was not finished when the curtain drew up on the first night, and that the parts were delivered to the actors before the ink was dry, and during the progress of the performance.

Those were halcyon days for managerial exchequers, when a single comedy such as "John Bull," the "Heir-at-Law," and the "Poor Gentleman," was considered novelty enough for an entire season. No new scenery was looked for, and the dresses were a mere nothing. There was no previous outlay of two or three thousand pounds, before a shilling could revert to the treasury.

Fawcett succeeded Lewis as stage-manager at Covent Garden, and filled that unenviable office for many years, with as much popularity as belongs to the post. The stage-manager is the adjutant of the establishment. If he does his duty to the commanding-officer, he is hated by the corps. If he sides with the rank and file he becomes suspicious to the chief. In private life Fawcett was kind-hearted and irreproachable; but in his official

capacity there was a quickness of manner which sometimes appeared like intentional rudeness. A performer in his own line, and of equal talent, once said to him that he disliked a new part; "You are not engaged to like your part," replied Fawcett, "you are engaged to act it." He was not profound in erudition, and some whimsical stories have been told of his proposed amendments in the elocutionary defects of careless actors: amongst others, the late William Abbott used to declare that the stage-manager publicly rebuked him at a rehearsal for saying "imminent danger," informing him that the adjective should be "eminent."

Fawcett possessed much versatility, and many of his delineations were as perfect as art and strong conception could render them. He could either melt the heart with pathos, or stimulate mirth with keen discriminating humour. As an instance of the homely pathetic, his *Rolamo*, in "Clari," was excellent. His *Falstaff's* were loudly praised; while his *Touchstone* was considered by many equal to King's. Neither were his *Lord Ogleby* and *Sir Peter Teazle* much behind in the race; until William Farren, in a sharp contest, left him in the rear, and came in at least neck-and-neck with the original.

We may here ask permission to step aside a little from our regular course, to mention a most extraordinary phenomenon who visited England for the first time in 1831; and though not a member of the English stage, becomes connected with its history from having exhibited his rare talent in several leading theatres. We allude to Nicolo Paganini, the inimitable violinist. He came with a prodigious introductory flourish, a vast continental reputation, and a few personal legends of the most exciting character. It was said that he had killed his wife in a fit of jealousy, and made fiddle-strings of her intestines; and that the devil composed a sonata for

him in a dream, as he formerly did for Tartini. When you looked at him you thought all this and more very likely to be true. His talent was almost supernatural; while his "get up," or *mise en scène*, as the French have it, was original and unearthly—such as those who saw him will never forget, and those who did not can with difficulty conceive. The man and his performance were equally unlike anything that had ever been witnessed before. No picture or description can convey an adequate idea of his mode of entrance and exit. To walk simply on and off the stage appears a common-place operation enough; but Paganini did this in a manner of his own, which baffled all imitators. When he placed himself in position to commence, the crowded audience became hushed into a death-like silence; and the thousands present gazed in motionless fascination on that strange epitome of many contrasted attributes. They took in at a glance his black habiliments; his sallow, attenuated visage; his chiselled features, Satanically expressive; his long, silky, raven tresses, and the flash of his dark eye as he shook them back on his shoulders; his thin, transparent fingers, unusually long; the fashion after which he grasped his bow, with the tremendous length to which he drew it; and, climax of all, the antithetical suddenness with which he jerked both bow and instrument under his arm, while he threw his hands behind him, elevated his head, his countenance almost writhing under what was meant for a smile of ecstasy, and his very hair instinct with life, at the conclusion of a bewildering fantasia! And there he stood, immovable and triumphant, while the theatre rang again with peals on peals of applause, and shouts of the most excited enthusiasm! None who witnessed this are likely again to see the same effect produced by mere mortal agency.

The *one* string feat was unworthy of this great master

in his art. It has been performed by fifty others, and is at best but an imperfect exhibition on a perfect instrument ; a mere piece of charlatanerie, or theatrical "gag," to use a professional term, sufficiently intelligible. There have been, and are, mighty magicians on the violin. Spagnoletti, De Beriot, Ole Bull (who, according to some, plays without any string at all), Sivori, Joachim, Ernst, and others, are all in the list of fine players ; but there never was a second Paganini.

In Dublin, during the autumn of 1831, Paganini saved the musical festival, which would have failed utterly but for his individual attraction, although supported by an array of talent in every department. The festival was held in the Theatre Royal, then, as now, the only building in the city capable of accommodating the vast numbers which alone could render such an experiment remunerative. The arrangement was to have oratorios kept distinct on certain mornings, and miscellaneous concerts on the evenings of other days. The concerts were crushers, while the first oratorio was a break-down. Many who would listen to sacred music in a church, or hall, objected to enter a theatre ; but both cathedrals had been refused on application. The committee became alarmed ; the expenses were enormous, and heavy liabilities stared them in the face. There was no time to be lost in hesitating scruples, and at the second oratorio, duly announced, Paganini appeared, violin in hand, in front of the orchestra, on an advanced platform overhanging the pit, not unlike orator Henley's tub, as immortalized by the satiric poet. Between the acts of the "Messiah" and the "Creation," he fiddled "The Witches at the great Walnut-tree of Benevento," with other equally appropriate interpolations, to the extatic delight of the applauding majority, who cared not a pin for Haydn or Handel, but came to hear Paganini alone ;

and to the no small scandal of the pious few, who looked upon the episode as too much on the north side of consistency. But expediency carried the day; the money was thereby forthcoming, everybody was paid in full, the committee escaped without damage, and a hazardous speculation undertaken by a few spirited amateurs was wound up with deserved success.

When the festival was over, the town empty, and a cannon-ball might have been fired down Sackville-street without doing much injury, Paganini engaged himself for a series of five concerts, in the theatre. For these he received 1,143*l*. His dividend on the first night amounted to 333*l*. The terms he demanded, and obtained, were a clear two-thirds of each receipt; twenty-five guineas per night for Pio Cianchettini, a poor pianoforte player, and a Signora Pietralia, a vocalist who could not sing at all; the full value for every free ticket, and an express codicil to the agreement, that if he required a rehearsal on a dark morning, when extra light might be indispensable, the expense of candles should not fall on him;—a contingency which by no possible contrivance could involve a responsibility exceeding five or six shillings.

Paganini was in all respects a very singular being, and an interesting subject for study. His talents were by no means confined to his wonderful powers as a musician. On other subjects he was well informed, acute, and conversable, of bland and gentle manners, and in society perfectly well bred. All this contrasted strangely with the dark stories that were bruited abroad, touching some passages in his early life. But outward semblance and deportment are treacherous quicksands, when taken as guides by which to sound the real depths of human character. Lord Byron has told us that his pocket was once picked by the civilest person he ever

conversed with, and that by far the mildest individual of his acquaintance was the remorseless Ali Pacha of Yanina. The same has been said of Djezzar, the butcher of Acre, who, as Mrs. Flockhart says of Fergus M'Ivor, was reputed to be "a quiet, weel-spoken gentleman, when not in ane o' his deevilish tirrories."

The expressive lineaments of Paganini's face told a powerful tale of passions which had been fearfully excited, which might be raised again from temporary slumber, or were exhausted by indulgence and premature decay, leaving deep furrows to mark their intensity. Like the aggregate of his countrymen, he looked much older than he was. Born at Genoa in 1784, he was in his forty-seventh year at the time of his first visit to England. With Italians in general, the elastic vigour of youth and manhood rapidly subsides into a protracted and joyless old age, numbering as many years, but with far less of physical and mental faculty to render them endurable, than the more equally poised gradations of our northern clime. It is by no means unusual to meet a well-developed Italian, whiskered to the eyebrows, and "bearded like the pard," who tells you, to your utter astonishment, that he is scarcely sixteen, when you have set him down from his appearance as, at least, five-and-thirty. The women are full grown at thirteen, begin to decay at two or three and twenty, and then become speedily old, but never die. An ancient marchesa or duchess, is as immortal as her diamonds.

Paganini's father, who was a commission broker by trade, but a great admirer of music, initiated his son in the principles of the art at a very early age, and as he grew up, placed him successively under the able instructions of Costa, Rolla, and Paer. His first professional appearance was at Lucca, where he found a zealous patroness in the Princess Elisa Baccicch

sister of Napoleon. The following extract from Colonel Montgomery Maxwell's book of military reminiscences, entitled, "My Adventures," dated Genoa, February 22d, 1815, supplies the earliest record which has been given to the public respecting Paganini, and affords authentic evidence that some of the mysterious tales which heralded his coming, were not without foundation:—"Talking of music, I have become acquainted with the most *outré*, most extravagant, and strangest character I ever beheld, or heard, in the musical line. He has just been emancipated from durance vile, where he has been for a long time incarcerated on suspicion of murder. There is something scriptural or Jewish in the *tout ensemble* of the strange physiognomy of this uncouth and unearthly figure. Not that, as in times of old, he plays, as Holy Writ tells us, on a ten-stringed instrument: on the contrary, he brings the most powerful, the most wonderful, and the most heart-rending tones from one string. His name is Paganini; he is very improvident, and very poor. The D——'s and the Impresario of the theatre got up a concert for him the other night, which was well attended, and on which occasion he electrified the audience. He is a native of Genoa, and if I were a judge of violin playing, I should pronounce him the most surprising performer in the world."

That Paganini was either innocent of the charge for which he suffered the incarceration Colonel Maxwell mentions, or that it could not be proved against him, may be reasonably inferred from the fact that he escaped the galleys or the executioner. In Italy there was then, (whatever there may be now), an exclusive law for the rich and another for the poor. As he was without money or friends, and unable to buy immunity, it is charitable to suppose he was entitled to it from innocence. A nobleman, with a few *zecchini* to bribe

the court, was in little danger from the law, which confined its practice entirely to the lower orders. In 1814, a Sicilian prince, who afterwards became a sort of fashionable lion in London for a season, most wantonly blew a vassal's brains out, merely because he put him in a passion. The case was not even inquired into, although it happened at the time when we were supposed to have conferred on the inhabitants of Trinacria the blessings and benefits of the English constitution, and to have abolished the feudal privileges and abuses. The prince sent half a dollar to the widow of the defunct (which, by the way, he borrowed from the writer of these memoirs, and never repaid), and there the matter ended. Lord Nelson once suggested to Ferdinand IV. of Naples to try and check the daily increase of assassination, by a few salutary executions. "No, no," replied old Nasone, who was far from being as great a fool as he looked, "that is impossible. If I once began that system, my kingdom would soon be depopulated. One half of my subjects would continually be employed in hanging the remainder."

Amongst other peculiarities, Paganini was a living compound of avarice and parsimony, with a most contradictory passion for gambling. He would haggle for sixpence in an engagement, and stake a rouleau on a single turn at *rouge-et-noir*. He screwed all who dealt with him in a bargain as tightly as if they were compressed in a vice; yet he had intervals of liberality, and occasionally deviated into a generous action. In this he bore some resemblance to the celebrated John Elwes of miserly notoriety, who debarred himself from the common necessities of life and lived on a potato-skin, but had been known to give a cheque for 100*l.* to a public charity and to contribute largely to private subscriptions. It is not on record that Paganini went so far as this; but

once or twice he played for nothing, and sent a donation to the Mendicity Association when he was in Dublin.

Paganini had a faithful attendant called Antonio, who tried to ape his master, but without success, in some of his peculiarities. He affected silence, solemnity, and eccentricity, but these attributes sat uneasily upon him, and he frequently abandoned them, and became social and communicative. Voltaire says, "No man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*," meaning thereby, as we may suppose, that, being behind the scenes of every-day life, he finds out that Marshal Saxe or Frederick the Great is as subject to the common infirmities of our nature as John Noakes or Peter Styles. Whether Paganini's squire of the body looked upon his master as a hero in the vulgar acceptation of the word, it is now useless to inquire; but, in spite of his stinginess, which the lackey writhed under, he regarded him with mingled reverence and terror. "A strange person, your master," once observed a visitor. "*Signore*," replied the faithful Sancho Panza, "*è veramente grand'uomo ; ma da non potersi comprendere.*" He is a truly great man, but quite incomprehensible. It was edifying to mark the awful importance with which Antonio bore the instrument nightly entrusted to his charge to carry to and from the theatre. He considered it an animated something, whether demon or angel he was unable to determine; but this he firmly believed, that it could speak in actual dialogue when his master pleased, or become a dumb familiar by the same controlling volition. This especial violin was Paganini's inseparable companion. It lay on his table before him as he sat meditating in his solitary chamber; it was placed by his side at dinner; and on a chair within his reach when in bed. If he woke, as he constantly did, in the dead of night, and the sudden *estro* of composition seized him, he grasped his

instrument, started up, and, on the instant, perpetuated the inspiration which otherwise he might have lost for ever. This marvellous Cremona, valued at four hundred guineas, Paganini, on his death-bed, gave to De Kontski, his nephew and only pupil,—also an eminent performer,—and in his possession it lately remained.

Paganini, having received enormous sums of money in France and England, returned to Italy, to take up his abode. His last years were spent at his villa Gajona, near Parma, but he died at Nice in 1840. Not long before his decease, he purchased the title of Baron, with a patent of nobility, from some foreign potentate, we believe, the King of Bavaria. These, with his accumulated earnings, somewhat dilapidated by gaming, he bequeathed to his only son. He was the founder of his school, and the inventor of those extraordinary tricks, with which his endless successors and imitators are accustomed to astonish the uninitiated. But he still stands at the head of the list, although it includes many eminent names, and is not likely to be pushed from his pedestal.

We turn from our digression on this singular exotic to speak of the retirement of one of the most popular of English actors, who justly merited the esteem in which he was held both in his private and professional character. We allude to Charles Young, who closed his public career at Covent Garden, on the 30th of May, 1832. The character he selected on this occasion was *Hamlet*, always considered one of his best performances, and in which he originally presented himself to a London audience at the Haymarket, on the 22d June, 1807. Matthews, who had played *Polonius* with him on his entrance, resumed the same character at his exit, and Macready complimented him by appearing as the *Ghost*. Every place in the boxes had been taken for some days

and the first rush filled the pit and galleries to such excess that, from the former, several females were handed over the boxes as they could not endure the dreadful pressure, notwithstanding they had been able to undergo the annoyance of waiting for hours at the doors, and the positive suffering of getting through them. The extremely crowded state of the audience occasioned much confusion and discontent; so much so, that the earlier part of the tragedy was inaudible, and the actors made symbols of speech, and stared at each other with the most edifying expression. Egerton first came forward, bowed, spread his arms, and retired to the wing, to consult; bowed, spread his arms again, and finally withdrew without being able to obtain a hearing. Young then appeared. He had hoped to be allowed to go on with his part, and that his presence would have stilled the storm, but he was mistaken. He advanced to the orchestra, and at last was made to understand that more had been admitted than the house would hold without risk of suffocation. He expressed his regret, and promised that the money should be returned to all those who "would have the kindness to take it and quit the theatre." But, by this time, the inconvenienced had wedged themselves into a few yielding inches of space, nobody thought fit to depart, and the disturbance gradually subsided. Notwithstanding the discontent, Young was loudly and unanimously greeted on his entrance, and he acknowledged his reception with becoming grace. He left off acting in the full vigour of his powers, before they evinced the slightest symptoms of decay, and before he began to feel the inroads of age. In his case, there was no coquetting with last appearances, no recalls for a few nights "by special desire," no longing aspirations to hear once more the applause of former days. When remonstrated with by

some zealous admirers who wished him to postpone his resolution, he replied, with the true spirit of a philosopher, and in the words of *Penruddock* which he had so often delivered, "When I am quietly retiring from the stage of this vain world, call me not back to lose the little grace that I have gained; I would not be made a spectacle in my decline and dotage." To his last audience he repeated the same sentiment in his farewell address. "It has been asked of me," he said, "why I retire from the stage while I am in possession of all the qualifications I could ever aspire to, unimpaired? I will give you my motives, but reason and feeling are not always cater-cousins. I feel the excitement and toil of my profession weigh more heavily upon me than formerly; and, if my qualifications are still unweakened, so I would have them remain. I know that they were never worthy of the degree of approbation with which you honoured them; but, such as they are, I am unwilling to continue before my patrons until I can offer them only tarnished metal."

Young was in easy, independent circumstances, and enjoyed his *otium cum dignitate* for twenty-six years, happy in himself, until his last long and painful illness, which he bore with Christian resignation, and contributing much, by his social accomplishments, to the happiness of a large circle of personal friends. He was ever most popular with his professional brethren, from his unvarying urbanity of manner and kindliness of disposition, and may be quoted as a rare instance of one

"Bless'd with temper whose unclouded ray
Could make to-morrow cheerful as to-day."

He was constitutionally light and humorous as a school-boy, and had nothing of the tragedian in his composition except the power of embodying the tragic

passions, in imitative art. Not long before he left London for his final residence at Brighton, he called with one of his grandsons to see the writer of these pages, who had long enjoyed his personal friendship, and who happened at the moment to be at dinner with his family. "Tell them," he said to the servant, "not to hurry, but when they are at leisure, there are two little boys waiting to see them." Beginning life with advantageous prospects, and receiving a good education at the Merchant Taylors' school, and afterwards at Eton College, Charles Young might have pursued fortune through many channels, but the stage was his fascination. He proved himself to be the most eminent disciple of the Kemble school, and a worthy successor of the founder on whom he built his style. His genius was imitative rather than creative: he had no stage trickery; his manner was invariably sustained; his cast of features commanding; his voice of a noble quality, and beautifully modulated; his discrimination excellent. If he seldom astonished, he never disappointed an audience. Whatever he did was done well, and altogether he may be pronounced the safest and most reliable actor that ever assumed leading characters. There was no apprehension that his physical powers would ever fail or that his judgment would be at fault. He was equally suited to represent the heroes of the classic drama and of the recent stage. Whether in Roman, Oriental, or modern fashionable costume, his appearance satisfied the eye and fixed the attention of the spectator. It has been repeated that Lord Byron pronounced Young the quintessence of mediocrity. If the noble poet said so, the phrase was more smart than just, more depreciating than true. There was no mediocrity in his performance of *Zanga*, *Pierre*, *Iago*, *Hamlet*, *The Stranger*, *Rolla*, *Rienzi*, *Brutus* and *Cassius*, both so excellent, that it was difficult to

assign the palm to either; and, above all, in his *Sir Pertinax Macsycophant*, in which he trod close on the heels of Cooke. In semi-serious characters, vibrating between tragedy and comedy, such as *Falkland*, *Lord Townly*, *Joseph Surface*, *Penruddock*, and others of that class, he maintained a high reputation. His comic performances abounded in rich humour, and he sang with a pleasant compass of voice, which he never attempted to force, and with good taste and execution.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLES KEAN RETURNS FROM AMERICA—LONG PASSAGE CONTRASTED WITH PRESENT SPEED—SERIOUS ACCIDENT ON LANDING—ENGAGED BY LAPORTE AT COVENT GARDEN AND APPEARS AS SIR EDWARD MORTIMER—QUALIFIED SUCCESS—ACTS IAGO TO HIS FATHER'S OTHELLO—LAST PERFORMANCE OF EDMUND KEAN—HIS DEATH AND PUBLIC FUNERAL AT RICHMOND—TABLET ERECTED TO HIS MEMORY BY HIS SON—SALE OF HIS EFFECTS BY AUCTION—FATE OF THE DRURY LANE VASE—CHARLES KEAN LEAVES LONDON AND DETERMINES NEVER TO RETURN UNTIL HE CAN COMMAND HIS OWN TERMS—REFLECTIONS ON THE PERISHING NATURE OF THE ACTOR'S ART, WITH ITS RELATIVE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES—ANECDOTES OF ANCIENT AND MODERN ACTORS.

CHARLES KEAN'S successful tour in America continued for nearly two years and-a-half. Sailing for England in the *Ontario*, he arrived at Portsmouth, on the 11th of February, 1833, having been forty days on the voyage. This was before the broad Atlantic had been spanned by steamers as with a bridge, reducing to hours what had formerly occupied days, and multiplying life and energy with increased locomotion—a feat which the great philosopher and mechanician, Dr. Lardner, had recently declared to be impracticable, but which he was not long afterwards amongst the first to refute by personal experiment. A voyage of three thousand miles is now scudded over rapidly, and with infinitely less discomfort than it took our ancestors a few generations back, to rumble in a lumbering *diligence* from Edinburgh to London.

As if to prepare the young adventurer for a cool reception at home, in descending into the boat which

was to convey him on shore, he fell overboard and narrowly escaped drowning. Such was his anxiety to reach London, and see his mother, after a long separation, that he travelled all night from Portsmouth in his wet clothes, but fortunately sustained no injury from this act of imprudence. Very soon after his arrival, he was engaged by Monsieur Laporte, at that time manager at Covent Garden, with a salary of 30*l.* per week, and stipulated as a *sine quâ non*, in opposition to the wishes of the theatrical authorities, that he should make his first appearance in *Sir Edward Mortimer*—his former success in that character at the Haymarket, in 1829, appearing a sufficient guarantee for a similar sequel in 1833. But he found himself mistaken. He was but coldly welcomed by the audience; the press veered round again, and the same papers which had formerly lauded his efforts in the same character, rescinded their opinions, and fell back on the old tone of condemnation. There seemed to him, in this, “something more than natural,” which his philosophy was unable to fathom. He had acted only a few nights with qualified success, when his father was engaged by Laporte, and in the month of March appeared as *Shylock*. But time and dissipation had done their work. The powers of the elder Kean had long been on the decline, and it was now painful to behold the “poor remains” of the once great delineator of Shakespeare’s noblest characters. He was reduced to a mere shadow, the wreck of what he had formerly been. There was still the occasional flash, which, as usual, electrified the audience, but the effect was momentary; the piercing eye, the varying expression, the epigrammatic distinctness, the sustained passion, were gone for ever.

Laporte thought, with sound managerial tact, that the appearance of the father and son in conjunction,

would be likely to attract money to his almost empty treasury. They acted together for the first, and, as it was so fated, the only time in London, on the 25th of March, 1833. The play was "*Othello*." The *Moor*, as usual, by Edmund Kean, *Iago* by Charles Kean, and *Desdemona* by Miss Ellen Tree. This eventful performance, the last appearance of the father on the mimic scene, and the rapid precursor of his final exit from the stage of life, is thus graphically described by the pen of Barry Cornwall.*

"There was no rehearsal, nor any arrangement as to the mode of play; but when the son arrived at the theatre in the evening, he was told that his father desired to see him. He went accordingly to his dressing-room, and found him shivering and exceedingly weak. 'I am very ill,' he said; 'I am afraid I shall not be able to act.' The actors who were present cheered him up; but to provide against the worst a servant was desired to air a dress (such as *Othello* wears), in order that Mr. Warde might take up the part, in case Kean should actually break down before the conclusion. The play commenced. After the first scene, Kean observed, 'Charles is getting on to-night—he's acting very well; I suppose that's because he is acting with me.' He himself was very feeble. He was, however, persuaded to proceed, and brandy and water was administered to him as usual. By this help he went on pretty well until the commencement of the third act; but before the drop-curtain rose, he said to his son, 'Mind, Charles, that you keep before me; don't get behind me in this act. I don't know that I shall be able to kneel; but if I do, be sure that you lift me up.' Still, he pursued his way without faltering. He went off with *Desdemona*, and no one observed any

* Life of Edmund Kean, London, 1835, vol. ii. pp. 239 et seq.

change. But, on entering again, when he says, 'What, false to *me*, &c.,' he was scarcely able to walk across the stage. He held up, however, until the celebrated 'Farewell,' which he uttered with all his former pathos; but on concluding it, after making one or two steps towards his son (who took care to be near him), and attempting the speech, 'Villain, be sure, &c.,' his head sank on his son's shoulder, and the tragedian's acting was at an end. He was able to groan out a few words in Charles's ear, 'I am dying—speak to them for me;' after which (the audience refusing in kindness to hear any apology) he was borne from the stage. His son, assisted by other persons, carried him to his dressing-room, and laid him on the sofa. He was as cold as ice; his pulse was scarcely perceptible, and he was unconscious of all that was going on around him. In this state he remained some time, when the remedies which were applied having restored him to his senses, he was taken to the Wrekin tavern, near the theatre, and Messrs. Carpue and Duchez (the surgeons) were sent for."

After a week's stay he was removed to Richmond, when he rallied a little, and was soon enabled to go out in a carriage. But the weather was cold, and he fancied that this airing gave him his death-blow. On the 15th of May he died. A short time before his death, during an interval of serious reflection, he wrote a penitential and affectionate letter to his wife, entreating her forgiveness and obliteration of the past. "If I have erred," he said, "it was my head and not my heart, and most severely have I suffered for it. Come home, *forget* and *forgive*." The letter produced the desired effect. "Mrs. Kean answered this appeal by proceeding at once to Richmond. She saw her husband once more after seven years of estrangement, and the most perfect reconciliation followed. She went to him

again repeatedly, and the best understanding prevailed between them. All this was the work of their son." *

The character of this great original actor, apart from his professional merits, is thus summed up by his biographer:—

“As a man, Kean, with all his faults, possessed redeeming points. He had an independent spirit; he was proud in his own way. He gave away large sums of money to his fellow-actors in distress. He exerted himself for charities. He stood up for the cause of his profession. If his delinquencies be retorted upon us, we may reply that his unchecked childhood was of itself sufficient to extenuate many errors; that years of penury and suffering should also be taken into the account in his favour; and that the sudden and almost unparalleled fortune that met and lifted him, in a moment, from obscurity and want to the very summit of prosperity and fame, was such as scarcely any man, with the common weakness of humanity, could have encountered without rendering himself liable to some little reproach.”

Edmund Kean died deeply involved in his pecuniary affairs. He was ever careless of money, paying bills without examining them, and trusting to others in all matters of finance. It is no exaggerated calculation to say, that he gave away, or was fleeced out of half his earnings. Sometimes he wrote cheques at night, when he was in a state of intoxication. These he desired to recall in the morning, but found they had already been presented and honoured, as soon as the doors of Coutts' bank were opened. The holders dreaded the repeal of their documents.

The career of this remarkable man—his indomitable genius, long contending with adverse circumstances, but

* Life of Edmund Kean, vol. ii. p. 243.

finally forcing its way in spite of every obstacle; his reiterated weaknesses and wasted opportunities,—all supply many subjects for painful meditation, but this is not the place in which they may be indulged. His funeral was most respectably conducted. Nearly all the leading members of the different London theatres were present, with a large proportion of the principal inhabitants of Richmond. The shops were closed in respect, as the procession passed along the green, and through the streets, to the western portal of the old church, near which his remains are deposited. His son, as soon as he was able, erected a tablet to his memory, with a medallion portrait, bearing the following inscription:—“EDMUND KEAN, DIED MAY 15TH, 1833, AGED FORTY-SIX. A MEMORIAL ERECTED BY HIS SON, CHARLES JOHN KEAN, 1839.”

The theatrical wardrobe and properties, furniture, plate, and other moveables, either at Richmond or the cottage in Bute, were seized and sold for the benefit of creditors. Included amongst these articles were some of peculiar interest—a snuff-box and two swords, gifts of Lord Byron, with the splendid silver cup (made after the celebrated Warwick vase), which cost three hundred guineas, presented to Edmund Kean in 1816 by the Committee and Company of Drury Lane. It was sold to a silversmith for the weight of the silver. In July, 1834, this cup was standing in the window of a carver and gilder's shop in Duncannon Street, Strand. Charles Kean, accidentally passing by, saw it, and walked in. He had a conversation with the shopman (the master being out), told him who he was, and begged him to say, that if not parted with for a reasonable time, the first money he earned should be applied to the purchase. On the following evening it was stolen from the window, as the handbills stated, which were published in

consequence, offering 20*l.* reward for its recovery. In all probability it was melted down forthwith, and had ceased to be in existence. Far better would it have been if the play-going public, admirers of the late possessor, or a few personal friends, had thought of securing the relic by subscription, as a present to his widow and son. This more desirable object might have been accomplished by a timely suggestion.

The sale of Edmund Kean's valuables took place on the 17th of June, 1834. The world wondered, or affected to wonder; and it was said beyond a whisper, by more than one, that Charles Kean *ought* to have bought in the personal effects of his father, and prevented a public auction. A hasty opinion uttered by those who either knew not, or, what is more likely, chose to forget, that the young man was still struggling for his own subsistence, that he had his mother to support, and that he had not as yet had sufficient time to accumulate store. Could he have commanded the necessary funds, a comparatively small sum might have redeemed the Bute estate, on which two or three years' ground rent had accumulated. This unprofitable purchase comprised twenty-four acres of bog and rock, on which his father, dreaming that he loved rural retirement, had expended 4,000*l.* in the building and furniture of a house, in the construction of a road by which it could be reached, and in other expensive improvements. It was generally rumoured that the noble Marquis, to whom the island belonged, had presented Kean the elder with an estate, from mere admiration of his genius. There was no foundation for this, as his lordship had never set himself forward as a Mæcenas; neither was there any reason why he should affect the character on an insulated occasion, and in favour of a person with whom he was personally unacquainted, who then possessed the means of indulg-

ing his fancies. The property at Bute fell with the rest to the creditors of the deceased actor, and was bought back from them by the Marquis for a mere trifle.

Shortly after the interrupted representation of "Othello," Sheridan Knowles' play of the "Wife" was produced at Covent Garden, and met with a success almost equal to that of the "Hunchback," which had been the great stay of the house during the preceding year. Charles Kean was the original *Leonardo Gonzaga*, Miss Ellen Tree, *Mariana*; Knowles himself playing *Julian St. Pierre*. The latter was determined to show the world, even if they required demonstration of the fact, that a great author might be a very insufficient reflector of his own creations. This piece, notwithstanding, ran for the remainder of the season, and was continued with undiminished attraction long after the Covent Garden company removed to the Olympic theatre. But Charles Kean saw he had as yet made little or no permanent impression. Causes were in operation which time and absence might remove. Knowing that, without difficulty, he could obtain profitable engagements elsewhere, he resolved to "bide his time," and to act no more in London until he could place himself at the "top of the tree." He had encountered rebuffs and disappointment; as often as he made a step in advance, some opposing influence dragged him back again; still the conviction of ultimate success was strong within him, and he felt satisfied that, sooner or later, he should attain the object of his ardent desire. One day he accidentally met Mr. Dunn, the treasurer of Drury Lane Theatre, who, on the part of Mr. Bunn, at that time the lessee, proposed a benefit for his mother, as the widow of Edmund Kean. The offer was a kind one, but Charles declined it, feeling that he was now able to support his surviving parent by his own exertions, and

unwilling to let her be considered an object of public charity. Mr. Dunn then suggested, that in all probability he could readily obtain an engagement at Drury Lane at 15*l.* per week. "No," replied the young actor, "I will never again set my foot on a London stage until I can command my own terms of 50*l.* a night. "Then, Charles Kean," rejoined Mr. Dunn with a smile, "I fear you may bid a long farewell to London; for the days of such salaries are gone for ever." Time rolled on, and, at the expiration of five years only, during which he had received 20,000*l.* by acting in the country, he drove to the stage-door of Drury Lane Theatre in his own carriage, with a signed engagement at 50*l.* a night in his pocket, and which engagement, for upwards of forty nights, was paid to him by the very man who had predicted its impossibility.

It would be difficult to cite a more striking instance of a strong internal conviction leading to the anticipated end, or of industry and perseverance so amply crowned by a corresponding result. There was talent of no ordinary quality, beyond doubt, with some assisting circumstances, in this individual case; but a valuable lesson and a powerful moral of general application are here combined. In struggling through the journey of life, some are doomed to toil perpetually on a rugged path, while others glide with railroad regularity on a smooth one. But the goal is open to all. What one has accomplished another may hope to achieve also, and no one should despair, while retaining health and unclouded faculties to sustain an honourable resolution.

A word or two here on the large salaries received by members of the theatrical profession. In all ages successful actors have been an uncommonly well paid community. This is a substantial fact which no one can deny, however much opinions may differ as to the

comparative value of the histrionic art, when ranked with poetry, painting, and sculpture. From hence we may infer that the world places a higher estimate on the ornamental accessories than on the bald realities of life. The actor complains of the hard conditions inseparable from his most successful efforts—that they fade with the decay of his own personal capabilities, and are only preserved for a doubtful interval through the medium of unfaithful imitation—very often a bad copy of an original which no longer exists to disprove the libel. In the actor's case, then, something must certainly be deducted on the score of posthumous renown; but this deficiency is amply balanced by living estimation and a realized fortune. There are many instances of great painters, poets, and sculptors (aye, and philosophers, too), who could scarcely gain a livelihood; but we should be puzzled to name a great actor without an enormous salary. Managers are not included in this category. They are unlucky exceptions; and not unfrequently lose in sovereignty what they had gained by service. An income of 3,000*l.* or 4,000*l.* per annum carries along with it many solid enjoyments. The actor who can command this by labouring industriously in his vocation, and whose ears are continually tingling with the nightly applause of his audience, has no reason to consider his lot a hard one, because posterity may assign to him in the temple of Fame a less prominent niche than is occupied by Milton, who, when alive, sold "Paradise Lost" for 15*l.* or by Rembrandt, who was obliged to feign his own death, before his pictures could provide him a dinner. If these instances fail to content him, let him recollect what is recorded of "Blind Mæonides."

"Seven Grecian cities claim'd great Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begg'd his bread."

No doubt it is a grand affair to figure in the page of history, and to be recorded amongst the foremost men of our generation. But there is good practical philosophy in the homely proverb which says, "solid pudding is better than empty praise." The reputation which wins its current value during life, is more useful to the proprietor than the honour that comes after death, and comes, as *David* says, in the "Rivals," "exactly when we can make a shift to do without it." To have our merits appreciated two or three ages hence, by generations yet unborn, and to have our works, whether with pen, pencil, or chisel, admired long after what was once our mortal substance is "stopping a beer-barrel," are very pleasing, poetical hallucinations for all who like to indulge in them; but the chances are we shall know nothing of the matter, while it is quite certain that if we do we shall set no value on it. Posterity, then, will be the chief gainers, and, of all concerned, the only party to whom we owe no obligations. The posterity, too, which emanates from the nineteenth century is much more likely to partake of the commercial than the romantic character, and to hold in higher reverence the memory of an ancestor who has left behind him 30,000*l.* in bank-stock or Consols, than of one who has only bequeathed a marble monument in St. Paul's, or "Westminster's old Abbey" a flourishing memoir in the "Lives of Illustrious Englishmen," or an epic poem in twenty-four cantos.

Let it not be supposed that we are disciples of *Pizarro*, who calls the applause of future ages "renown for visionary boys to dream of;" or that we depreciate the love of posthumous fame with "those longings after immortality," which are powerful incentives to much that is good and great; but we are led into this train of thought by hearing it so constantly objected as a mis-

fortune to the actor, that his best efforts are but fleeting shadows, and cannot survive him. This, being interpreted fairly, means, that he cannot gain all that genius and perseverance toil for; but he has won a preponderating share, and ought to be satisfied. Perhaps, too, the indistinctness of tradition may be more favourable to his memory than the stereotyped, matter-of-fact accuracy of contemporary evidence.

Formerly the actor had to contend with prejudices which stripped him of his place in society, and degraded his calling. This was assuredly a worse evil than perishable fame; but all this has happily passed away. The interdict is removed, and he takes his place with kindred artists, according to his artistic pretensions. His large salary excites much wondering comment, and more jealousy; but he is no longer exposed to obloquy and insult. When the elder Sheridan appeared as an evidence on the trials resulting from the celebrated "Mahomet riot" at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, in 1754, he happened to use the term gentleman as applied to himself. On this one of the opposing counsel took him up, and said, "I have often heard of a gentleman poet, a gentleman painter, and a gentleman architect, but I never yet saw a gentleman player." "Then I hope, Sir," replied Sheridan calmly, "that you see one now."

Le Kain, the French Roscius, once received a heavier affront than this, which he was obliged to swallow as he might. Dining one day at a *restaurateur's*, he was accosted by an old general officer near him. "Ah! Monsieur Le Kain, is that you? Where have you been for some weeks? we have lost you from Paris." "I have been acting in the South, may it please your excellency." "*Eh, bien!* and how much money have you earned?" "In six weeks, Sir, I have received

four thousand crowns." "*Diable!*" exclaimed the general, twisting his moustache with a truculent frown. "What's this I hear? A miserable *mimic* such as thou can gain in six weeks double the sum that I, a nobleman of twenty descents, and a knight of St. Louis, am paid in twelve months! *Voilà une vraie infamie!*" "And at what sum, Sir," replied Le Kain, placidly, "do you estimate the privilege of thus addressing me?"

In those days, and long after, in France, an actor was denied Christian burial, and would have been broken alive on the wheel if he had presumed to put himself on an equality with a gentleman, or dared to resent an unprovoked outrage.

The large salaries of recent days were even surpassed amongst the ancients. In Rome, Roscius, and Æsopus his contemporary, amassed prodigious fortunes by their professional labours. Roscius was paid at the rate of 45*l.* a-day, amounting to more than 15,000*l.* per annum of our currency. No wonder he was fond of his art, and unwilling to relinquish its exercise. He became so rich, that at last he declined receiving any emolument, and acted gratuitously for several years.* A modern manager would give something to stumble on such a star. Æsopus, at an entertainment, produced a single dish stuffed with singing birds, which, according to Dr. Arbuthnot's computation, must have cost about 4,883*l.* sterling. He left his son a fortune amounting to 200,000*l.* British money.† It did not remain long in the family, as, by the evidence of Horace and Pliny, he was a notorious spendthrift, and rapidly dissipated the honest earnings of his father.

* Plin. lib. vii. cap. 39 ; Macrob. Sat. lib. ii. cap. 10 ; Middleton's Life of Cicero :—Cic. Orat. pro Q. Roscio.

† Macrob. Sat. lib. ii. cap. 10.

Decimus Laberius, a Roman knight, was induced, or, as some writers say, compelled, by Julius Cæsar to appear in one of his own *Mimes*, an inferior kind of dramatic composition very popular amongst the Romans, and in which he was unrivalled, until supplanted by Publius Syrus. The said Laberius found consolation for his degraded dignity in a good round sum, as Cæsar gave him twenty thousand crowns and a gold ring for this, his first and only appearance on any stage. Neither was he "alone in his glory," being countenanced by Furius Leptinus and Quintus Calpenus, men of senatorial rank, who, on the authority of Suetonius, fought in the ring for a prize. We are inclined to think the money had its due weight with Laberius. He was evidently vain, and in his prologue, preserved by Macrobius, and translated by Goldsmith, he laments his age and infirmities quite as pathetically as the disgrace to which he was subjected. "Why did you not ask me to do this," thus he remonstrates with Cæsar, "when I was young and supple, and could have acquitted myself with credit?" But, according to Macrobius, the whole business was a regular contract, with the terms settled beforehand. "*Laberium asperæ libertatis equitem Romanum, Cæsar quingentis millibus invitavit, ut prodiret in scenam.*"* Good encouragement for a single amateur performance!

Garriick retired at the age of sixty, having been thirty-five years connected with the stage. He left behind him above 100,000*l.* in money, besides considerable property in houses, furniture, pictures, plate, and articles of *virtû*. He lived in the best society, and feasted archbishops, bishops, and noblemen, with becoming splendour. But he had no family to educate

* Macrobi. Sat. lib. ii. cap. 7.

or provide for, and was systematically prudent in expenditure, although charitable to the extreme of liberality when occasion required. Edmund Kean might have saved a larger fortune than Garrick, had his habits been equally regular. George Frederick Cooke, in many respects a kindred genius to Kean, threw away a golden harvest in vulgar dissipation. The sums he received in America alone would have made him independent. John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons both retired in opulence, although less wealthy than might have been expected. She had through life heavy demands upon her; and he, in an evil hour, invested much of his savings in Covent Garden theatre. Young left the stage in the full tide of his fame, with a handsome independence. Macready did the same under similar circumstances. Liston was always accounted one of the richest actors of his day, and William Farren is generally set down as "a warm man." Miss Stephens, the Keans (father and son), Macready, Braham, and others, have frequently received 50*l.* per night for a long series of performances. Tyrone Power bade fair to hold one of the highest places in the list, such was his increasing popularity and attraction, when the untimely catastrophe occurred which ended his career, and produced a vacancy *we* are not likely to see filled up.

John Bull has ever been remarkable for his lavish encouragement of foreign artists. The largest remuneration awarded to native talent bears no comparison with the salaries given to French and Italian singers, dancers, and musicians. This love of imported prodigies is no recent passion, but older than the days of Shakespeare. *Trinculo*, in the "Tempest," thus apostrophises the recumbent monster, *Caliban*, whom he takes for a fish: "Were I in England now, as I was

once, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man. Any strange beast there makes a man."

Catalani, Pasta, Sontag, Malibran, Grisi, Taglioni, Rachel, Rubini, Mario, Tamburini, Lablache, Paganini, *cum multis aliis*, have received their thousands and tens of thousands; but the Jenny Lind mania left all precedents at an immeasurable distance. What the Swedish nightingale drew from England during her last public appearance, in concerts alone, has never authentically transpired, but we can scarcely exaggerate when we set the figure at a sum sufficient to buy up the fee simple of half the hereditary baronies in any given country on the continent.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARLES KEAN AT DUBLIN—ENGAGEMENT IN HAMBURGH—SUCCESSFUL OPENING—PERFORMANCES INTERDICTED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES—ATTACHMENT TO MISS ELLEN TREE, AFTERWARDS MRS. C. KEAN—LUDICROUS ANECDOTES AT EXETER—THE LATE DUCHESS OF ST. ALBAN'S—MARQUIS OF NORMANBY—LORD PLUNKETT—GREAT SUCCESS IN EDINBURGH—LORD MEADOWBANK—COMPLIMENT FROM MR. STRANGE, WHO REMEMBERED GARRICK IN HAMLET—LORD JEFFREY—MADAME MALIBRAN—HER UNEXPECTED DEATH AT MANCHESTER—DEATH OF CHARLES MATHEWS, SEN.—MONTAGUE TALBOT, A DUBLIN ACTOR—MATHEWS'S GALLERY OF THEATRICAL PORTRAITS—EDWIN FORREST, THE AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN—RETIREMENT OF CHARLES KEMBLE—HIS RETURN FOR A FEW NIGHTS, BY DESIRE OF HER PRESENT MAJESTY—RETIREMENT OF JOHN LISTON—DEATH OF JOHN REEVE.

IN October, 1833, Charles Kean, after leaving London, performed twelve nights in Dublin, during which engagement he personated the arduous and varied characters of *Sir Giles Overreach*, *Sir Edward Mortimer*, *Othello*, *Jaffier*, *Reuben Glenroy*, *Richard the Third*, *Romeo*, and *Macbeth*. In all he was well received, and laid the basis of a reputation which from that hour increased rapidly with every succeeding visit. The characteristic warmth with which he was welcomed in Dublin received no impulse from national partiality, because the candidate for their favour happened to be an Irishman—the fact was either unknown or disregarded. But, naturally quick, they saw and encouraged the rising merit, uninfluenced by preconceived opinions or fostered prejudices.

Before the close of the year, Charles Kean accepted an offer to perform, with a well-selected English company, in Hamburgh, under the direction of Mr. Barham Livius. The experiment promised successfully, as far

as general patronage was concerned; but in a few weeks it came to a premature close, through the interference of the local authorities, to whom a representation was made that the attraction of the "foreign intruders" interfered with and injured the regular establishments. Upon this hint, the English actors received notice to quit. Some governments are less tenacious of the interests of their fellow-countrymen.

The heroine of this company was Miss Ellen Tree, a young lady equally distinguished by her amiable character, personal attractions, and high professional ability. A friend, well acquainted with both, predicted to Charles Kean, when dining one day with his family, that he would infallibly lose his heart, exposed to such combined temptations, and has lived to see his prediction most happily accomplished in the marriage of the parties. The visit to Hamburgh led to an intimacy, increasing a mutual attachment previously commenced in London, and they became engaged to each other. But the projected union was broken off, and for some years appeared anything but a likely event, the mothers on both sides deeming it equally ineligible. At this time all the advantages were clearly on the side of the lady. The young actor had yet the world before him, with his fortune to make; while the object of his choice was in the full tide of her fame, with worth, beauty, and accomplishments which might have added lustre to a coronet.

When Charles Kean returned from the Continent, engagements in all the leading country theatres presented themselves in abundance. During a visit to Exeter, a ludicrous incident occurred. He had a favourite Newfoundland dog, named Lion, who accompanied him everywhere, and usually remained in his dressing-room while he was on the stage. One evening, during *Richard the Third*, the door happened to be left open, and Lion

heard the well-known voice in loud excitement. He trotted out, and appeared at the wing just as *Richard* and *Richmond* were on the point of engaging in the last scene. Lion growled at his master's antagonist, exhibited his teeth, and rushed furiously forward; whereupon the terrified *Richmond*, deeming the odds too serious, fled from the field, and was seen no more. Kean, being left without an antagonist, was obliged to fall and die unwounded. Lion bestrode his master in triumph, licking his face, and barking vociferously while the curtain fell, amidst a roar of laughter and applause. *Richard* was then unanimously summoned before the curtain; presented himself, made his bow, and retired. Loud calls continued for "the dog;" but Lion, having finished his unstudied rôle, declined a second appearance.

On another occasion, in the same city, and while acting in the same play, Charles Kean had to deal with a tall, ungainly *Richmond*, who knew nothing of fencing. He pressed him into a corner, until he fell backwards into the orchestra, and remained fixed in the kettle-drum, through which he partially disappeared. *Richard* again found himself without an opponent, until the musicians helped the latter out of his narrow prison, handed him his sword, and he renewed the fight, so inopportunately impeded. The roars of the audience may be more readily imagined than described. But still *Richard* remained invulnerable, and at last succumbed without a wound. *Richmond* then avenged himself by showering deadly thrusts upon his fallen foe.

Amongst Charles Kean's early and warmest patronesses, we must enumerate the late Duchess of St. Alban's, from whose kindness he obtained many valuable introductions. He had no particular claim on her notice, beyond the sympathy naturally excited in a generous mind for a young man of talent struggling

with difficulties, and in want of patronage. Exalted in rank, and possessed of boundless wealth, she had herself in earlier days gone through the ordeal of adversity; and when selected by fortune for one of her especial favourites, encountered every species of abuse which slander and detraction could invent, to terrify her into the purchase of silence by bribes which would have exhausted the treasury of Croesus, without accomplishing the desired object. She had the good sense and firmness to pay no regard to these attacks, while her heart remained ever kind and her hand extended.

The portals of fashion being thus opened through interest, Charles Kean made his own way by gentleman-like bearing and unassuming demeanour. During his probationary *lustrum* in the provinces, Edinburgh vied with Dublin in encouragement and remuneration. In each of these great cities he was invited into the best society. In Dublin he became a frequent guest at the Castle and the Park, under the viceroyalty of the Marquis of Normanby, and the chief secretaryship of the Earl of Carlisle (then Lord Morpeth). These two distinguished noblemen and statesmen have ever been remarkable for their admiration of the dramatic art. The late venerable ex-chancellor, Lord Plunkett, although beyond his seventieth year, was generally to be seen in the dress boxes on the nights of Kean's performance. Chief Justice Doherty (whose wife was his mother's second cousin), a most accomplished scholar, was seldom absent. In Edinburgh, in the year 1837, he cleared, by a single engagement, nearly 1,000*l*. All the leading members of the bench and bar, including many names of first-rate literary celebrity, were to be seen amongst his constant auditors. In the list we may enumerate the Lords of Session (as the Scotch judges are called), Meadowbank, Medwyn, Jeffery, Fullerton,

Cockburn, Moncrieff, Robertson, and Mr. Maitland, afterwards Lord Dundrennan. The professors of the university also came forth, and many learned and distinguished scholars, who seldom frequented the ordinary performances of the theatre. During the same year (1837), an engagement in Glasgow, similar in duration to that of Edinburgh, even exceeded it in profit; Charles Kean's dividends reaching an average of 115*l*. While this was going on, a Baillie of influence in the city, remarkable for his non-theatrical tastes, called upon him at his hotel, and with many preliminary flourishes and compliments, invited him to set aside the proceeds of one of his nights for the advantage of a local charity.

"Sir," replied Charles Kean, "I live by my profession, and I cannot afford to give up considerably above 100*l*. for the purpose you name; but oblige me by a sight of your subscription-list, and I will contribute accordingly."

"Oh—ah!" said the functionary, a little taken aback. "I didn't view the matter in that light, certainly. Here is the list."

"And here, Sir," rejoined Kean, "are ten guineas—the highest sum I find there from any of your richest citizens."

"Oh—ah!" ejaculated the Baillie a second time, and departed with many thanks. On his way home he called at the box-office, and, for the first time in his life, took a ticket for the play on the actor's benefit.

The residents of the Northern Metropolis, or modern Athenians, as they delight to be called, have ever been slow and cold when sitting in critical judgment on new candidates for their favour; but they are warm and steady when once that judgment is pronounced. On Mrs. Siddons's first appearance, the crowded pit sat in

solemn silence throughout four-fifths of "Isabella." Point after point, which had electrified the more susceptible Londoners, fell upon them without enkindling a flash, or exciting an exclamation. Eyes looked dull, and hands were quiet. The great actress was in despair, and had scarcely courage to go on. One burst more, with concentrated energy, and she paused for the result. Still a moment of silence, when a dictatorial voice from the pit exclaimed, "That's no bad." This settled the question, and roused the whole house to applause, which fell "fast and furious," with scarcely any intermission, to the end of the play.

The three letters from the late Lord Meadowbank, here inserted, may be read with interest, as conveying the opinion of a very competent judge on the merits of a young performer; and also as bearing on the much disputed question of the real or assumed mental aberration of *Hamlet*. The two first letters are addressed to Mr. Murray, the manager of the Edinburgh Theatre. The third to Charles Kean himself:—

"13, Royal Circus,
"March, 1836.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I have spoken with a good many persons who were not fortunate enough to have seen Mr. C. Kean play *Hamlet*, and who are very desirous of having it in their power to do so. Can this be obtained by intercepting him on his way back from Aberdeen? Perhaps the *eclât* of having been solicited to play another night might induce him to change his plan of not returning by Edinburgh; and if you think it desirable either for him or you, there will be no difficulty in getting up a requisition to Mr. Kean making the request. To this I shall be ready to subscribe most willingly, as, though I have seen him twice in *Hamlet*, I shall be most glad to

see him perform that noble character again. The only night until the 28th on which I could not do this is the 22d.

“ I remain, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

“ A. M. MACONCHIE.

“ William Murray, Esq.”

“ 13, Royal Circus,

“ March 31st, 1836.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ Having availed myself last night of your kindness in giving me seats, I have been so much delighted again with Mr. Kean’s personification of *Hamlet*, that I cannot resist the temptation of requesting that I may have a box, should the character be repeated, or should Mr. Kean play *Othello*, and, above all, *Lear*.*

“ I have never seen *anything* on the stage so perfect as Mr. Kean’s *Hamlet*. We may rise from reading the criticisms of Johnson and Malone, without fully comprehending the precise character which Shakespeare intended to delineate. But no one can have seen the representation of Mr. Kean, without having all his difficulties removed, and his doubts cleared away. From the beginning to the end, *Hamlet* is a gentleman and a prince ; but a gentleman the equilibrium of whose brain has been deranged, and who, for the purposes of revenge, feigns that madness in a greater degree. But he is not sensible himself of this derangement. I could not detect a single emphasis improperly placed. The recitation of all the speeches was exquisitely fine. Nothing was lost to the sense which the most finished study could convey, and yet the audience were, to all that appeared, entirely lost sight of. In short, the identification was complete ; and it was impossible to fancy that it

* This letter led to a renewed engagement with Charles Kean in Edinburgh, when he had finished his northern tour.

was not the Prince of Denmark who himself occupied the scene.

"I could not help observing, in the scene with the *Ghost*, that, since the days of Garrick, the observations of Partridge, in 'Tom Jones,' on that part of the play, never could have been so well applied.* I have to offer an apology for yielding to the impulse of the feelings of gratification which were excited last night, by troubling you with these remarks. But having lived long enough to have seen *all* the *Hamlets* who have appeared on the stage for forty years, and never before having seen the character embodied as I felt it, I thought it might afford satisfaction to Mr. Kean to know (should you think it worth while to tell him) what an old and early admirer of his father thought of his performance of the finest and most difficult of Shakespeare's manifold creations. It is now twenty-three years since I went to Glasgow for no other purpose than to see the late Mr. Kean play *Othello*.

"I remain, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"A. M. MACONOCHIE.

"W. Murray, Esq."

Mr. Murray, as might be supposed, handed this letter with much alacrity, to the subject of its eulogium. I now lies on the table of the writer of these pages while his hand traces them. The third letter, addressed to Charles Kean, runs thus:—

* Dr. Johnson, who lost no opportunity of finding fault with Garrick, thought his terror in this scene exaggerated and unnatural. "Do you think, Sir, if you saw a ghost," said Boswell, "you would start as Garrick does in *Hamlet*?" "No, Sir;" replied the cynical philosopher, "If I did, I should frighten the ghost."

"13, Royal Circus,
"April 15th.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"Some time ago I ventured to give an opinion that you were endowed with powers to excel equally in the higher walks of comedy, as in tragedy; an opinion formed on the observation of occasional *glimpses* of what appeared, in some of the characters in which I had the high gratification of seeing you, as well as from your manner in the ordinary intercourse of society. That opinion has been confirmed beyond all doubt, by what I saw in your representation of *Hotspur* last night, which, allow me to add, considering the nature and extreme difficulty of the part, has left no doubt on my mind, that if you do not throw away your health, as I fear you are doing, by over-exertion, you will very speedily rival the fame and reputation of Garrick. But the parts which more forcibly struck me as supporting the opinion I have referred to, were, not only the scene after the first interview with the *King*, as well as I remember it, but also that with *Lady Percy*, in which the playfulness of manner and the comic effect produced both from voice and expression, satisfied me entirely that you could not fail in *Don Felix*, and the like range of characters, if you would only set your mind to them. It is but failing, at the most; and if you succeed, then, as I said, you rival Garrick.

"Why did you leave out the scene with *Glendower*? *

"Yours ever,

"A. M. MACONOCHIE.

"To Charles Kean, Esq."

&c. &c.

* This fine and characteristic scene has never been acted. Perhaps from a desire not to let any portion of the play detract from or interfere with the humorous prominence of *Falstaff*.

On a later occasion, Lord Meadowbank, in forwarding to Charles Kean a complimentary note from an old gentleman of the name of Strange, accompanied it by these remarks—"Mr. Strange is son of Sir Robert Strange, the eminent engraver. Being above eighty-four years of age, he was a living play-goer in the days of Garrick, and saw him more than once play *Hamlet*, which, in his opinion—and he is highly accomplished, and perfectly entire in his faculties—was not equal to Mr. Charles Kean's representation. He is married to a daughter of the late Viscount Melville."

Lord Jeffrey, so long known and celebrated as the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, and the dispenser of literary reputation before he became a judge, introduced himself to Charles Kean in the year 1836, and soon became one of his warmest admirers. In the *Caledonian Mercury* of Thursday, the 24th of March, 1836, we find this notice of "Richard the Third," in which the name of the great critic is introduced:—"During the encounter with *Richmond*, which Mr. Kean sustained, not only with wonderful energy and lofty daring, but with a character and truth that were truly natural, the excitement of the audience was raised to the utmost pitch; and his attitude, look, and whole expression, after he received the fatal thrust, were appalling to such a degree, that the audience seemed to feel a relief when the proud spirit was for ever quenched. Not the least interesting feature of the scene was the presence of Lord Jeffrey. His lordship was in a private box, and unseen during the earlier part of the evening; but during the last spirit-stirring scenes, he presented himself in front, and warmly joined in the general acclaim to the commanding genius of the actor."

In a letter to Lady Gifford, about this time, Lord Jeffrey thus speaks of the impression made on him

experienced and critical mind by the fervour of the rising actor :—

“ You are possibly aware how highly I think of Charles Kean’s talents, and how much I shall be gratified to see him attain the success which I am persuaded he deserves, and to which I believe he is destined. Independent of my admiration of his professional excellence, I have much esteem and regard for him as an individual.”

These and similar opinions from judges of the same weight, counterbalanced in the mind of Charles Kean the strong censures which had been so unsparingly dealt out to him by a majority of the London papers,* and encouraged his fond hope that prejudice and not justice had dictated their severity. At a later period, when he had triumphantly passed the London ordeal, and was preparing to visit America for the second time, Lord Jeffrey addressed him as follows :—

“ Craig Creek,
“ July 11th, 1839.

“ DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“ I now inclose you a line of introduction to my brother-in-law, Dr. Wilkes, which will open to you, I make no doubt, the houses of all his family and the rest of that circle. I can scarcely say that I have now any acquaintance at New York, but with your reputation you can really need no introduction. I have accordingly confined my testimony rather to your agreeableness as an individual, and the modesty with which you bear your high and hard-won fame, than to the gifts and attainments by which you have deserved it.

“ I hope you will have a prosperous voyage and a bril-

* At this very time, and in the midst of his Edinburgh triumphs, a local paper, inoculated with the hostile feeling, said, “ When will our public be weary of the contortions of this galvanized carcass ? ”

liant success, and that you will come back to us loaded with wealth and honours, before I am too old to understand and rejoice in your prosperity. But I must be very far gone indeed if I am not most happy to see you. With kind remembrances from Mrs. Jeffrey, believe me always, very faithfully yours,

J. JEFFREY.

“To Charles Kean, Esq.”

Liverpool proved to Charles Kean another stronghold, almost equal in value to Dublin or Edinburgh. Manchester, Bath, Exeter, Plymouth, with many of the larger towns, followed the example. In the summer of 1836, he visited his native city of Waterford, and was greeted by the compliment of a public dinner. A silver claret jug, valued at 100*l.*, and voted on this occasion, was afterwards presented to him in London, by a deputation of gentlemen from Waterford, inscribed as follows :—

“PRESENTED TO CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.
AS A TOKEN OF ESTEEM FOR HIS PRIVATE CHARACTER, AND
ADMIRATION OF HIS TALENTS,
BY A FEW FRIENDS,
IN HIS NATIVE CITY OF WATERFORD,
JUNE 28TH, 1836.”

He was now making rapid strides towards fame and fortune; establishing himself in the best society, and acquiring hosts of influential friends in every place in which he appeared. The theatres were almost invariably crowded wherever he acted. He presented the unique instance of an actor without metropolitan popularity, proving himself the safest speculation and the most attractive “star” that a manager in the country could venture to engage.

In the meantime the two great national temples of the

British drama, in London, were undergoing the usual vicissitudes. Before the expiration of 1833, Mr. Bunn became lessee of both Drury Lane and Covent Garden; a Napoleonic sovereignty which no single head or hand could possibly wield with satisfaction or permanent success. But this temporary union, which was repealed in 1835, gave rise to much discussion and squabbling on the subject of a third patent theatre. The application, although defeated at the time, led to the ultimate abolition of all patents, and the establishment of the present free trade in theatres, under the control of the Lord Chamberlain. When Mr. Bunn gave up the lease of Covent Garden, it passed into the hands of Mr. Osbaldistone, of the Cobourg, or Victoria, who removed thither the transpontine prices, system of management, and style,—with what effect the result of two short seasons most unsatisfactorily demonstrated.

During the season of 1835, the British operatic stage received a memorable although fleeting addition, in the person of an enchanting foreigner—Madame Malibran de Beriot, *née* Garcia, as the continental formula runs. She was engaged by Mr. Bunn to appear at both his theatres, and for twenty-six performances, at the rate of three per week, received no less than 3,463*l.*, secured beforehand—an average of rather more than 135*l.* per night. Her attraction was so great that the daring speculator escaped from his liabilities without being absolutely smothered under them; but the defalcations on the off-nights of a telling “star,” when the costly exotic lies in abeyance, make terrible inroads on the receipts of any given week.

Poor Malibran died rather suddenly, during the Manchester festival, on the 23d of September, 1836. She was then only in the twenty-ninth year of her age. She sank under exhaustion, produced by exertions beyond

her physical capability; and not as was generally and maliciously circulated at the time, in consequence of the mistaken treatment of her own foreign physician, who was also an intimate friend, and in whom she placed the most unbounded confidence. Her death-warrant was signed before the arrival of Dr. Belluomini, and his system could neither accelerate nor retard its execution. Her remains were in the first instance consigned to the church-yard of the cathedral in Manchester, but not long after exhumed and transported to Lacken, near Brussels, where she and her beloved De Beriot possessed a park and château. In a book purporting to be memoirs of the deceased vocalist, by the Countess de Merlin, it is stated that, "The committee of the Manchester musical festival wished to pay De Beriot the full amount of his wife's engagement, though she had only performed twice. This he refused!" Mr. Bunn, in commenting on the numerous mis-statements in this pretended biography, says, in his work entitled "The Stage; Before and Behind the Curtain" (and he was likely to speak from certain knowledge), with reference to this particular passage—"De Beriot did no such thing, for he received every farthing of it."

Malibran may be pronounced one of the greatest artists the world has ever produced. It is difficult to say whether she excelled most in acting or in singing, in tragedy or in comedy. There was a reality, an earnestness, an identity in all she did, which have seldom been equalled, and never surpassed. She was fond of money, and exacting in the terms of a bargain, but enthusiastically attached to her art, and jealous of even the shadow of rivalry. Her mind was in a perpetual fever of excitement. Cut off in the full bloom of youth, fortune, and professional reputation, to her may be aptly applied the impressive lines of Dryden:—

“ A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
Fretted the puny body to decay,
And o'er inform'd the tenement of clay.”

On the 28th of June, 1835, died, on his fifty-ninth birthday, the inimitable Charles Mathews. We call him inimitable, for, though he had many followers, he left no successor, while he himself initiated all the world. He possessed also the faculty of ventriloquism in a rare degree.

Mathews was the son of a Wesleyan bookseller in the Strand, who placed him for education in Merchant Taylors' School, where, we believe, he was a fellow-student with Charles Young. It was intended that he should follow his father's business; but the stage seduced him into its more flowery paths. He obtained much celebrity in the York circuit; and made his first appearance at the Haymarket on the 16th of May, 1803, as *Jabal*, in the “Jew,” and *Lingo*, in the “Agreeable Surprise.” For many years before his death, he had ceased to practise as a legitimate member of any company, and became joint proprietor of the Adelphi, in conjunction with his friend and pupil, Frederick Yates. The latter managed the theatre, while the former went round the country with his budget. Both were supposed to be eminently successful; but read the “Memoirs of Charles Mathews,” and will it not be found written there, how, at the close of what was proclaimed one of the most successful seasons the Adelphi Theatre had ever witnessed, when the house could scarcely contain the crowds who nightly thronged the doors, the proprietors wound up their accounts with a surplus on the left-hand side, simply because the expenses exceeded any possible receipts? Let all theatrical speculators lay this salutary lesson to their hearts: the great secret of profitable management consists less in the sum you can

take than in the balance you can contrive to keep. The song says :—

“ How happy’s the soldier that lives on his pay,
And spends half-a-crown out of sixpence a day ;”

We have never yet heard of any manager disposed to join chorus in this canticle. At the Adelphi, Mathews exhibited regularly his annual “At Home,” and never were audiences more delighted than by the endless variety of portraits which he so accurately sketched for them. But because Mathews established unrivalled fame in this exclusive line of entertainment, and was admitted to be an imitator beyond parallel, it was usual with many to assert, that for this very reason he could not be an actor : and when he gave up appearing as a part of the whole, to take the entire task of entertaining an audience for three successive hours, without interval, on his own shoulders, exceptions criticism endeavoured to place him in a lower grade than when he formed merely an item in a combined *dramatis personæ*. As an actor, he would have been deemed greater, had not his peculiar vein given a handle to ready detractors to call that mimicry, which was, in fact, creation. The conclusion appears to us as illogical as it was ungenerous.

Entertainments entirely supported by one person had often been given before the days of Charles Mathews. Foote, Tate Wilkinson, Henderson, and Bannister, were each celebrated and successful in their way : but Mathews was the first who added the *Monopolylogue*, and wound up with a drama of many characters personated by his single self. In this, the rapidity and completeness of the changes, either as to countenance or costume, far surpassed anything of the kind attempted by the ablest of his predecessors. Harry Stoe Van Dyk

summed up the character of his professional powers in one comprehensive line :—

“Thou *live* kaleidoscope, thou single *Co.!*”

Mathews was irritable and eccentric to a proverb, full of crotchets and fancies, but withal warm-hearted, unsuspecting, and liberal ; a most amusing companion, and a steady friend. He enjoyed the intimacy of Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron, Moore, Rogers, and all the *literati* of his day ; was not unfrequently the guest of George IV. ; and his society was courted by the highest and noblest in the land. He was as much respected in his private, as applauded in his public life ; and few men were more generally beloved by all who had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with his worth. He died poor, for which many causes might be assigned, including unsuccessful speculations ; although, with the exception of Edmund Kean, he received more money in a given period than any performer of his day. His widow and biographer, who knew him better than any one else, says, in an affectionate tribute to his excellence, “he was one of the most unassuming possessors of genius that ever graced it with a life of undeviating rectitude and goodness.” He was twice married, and had one child only, the present Charles Mathews, who inherits much of his father’s genius, though not exactly in the same line.

During the early part of William Abbott’s first season as manager of the Dublin Theatre, Mathews, who was an intimate friend of his, accepted an engagement there, and commenced with the characters of *Goldfinch* and *Morbleu*, in Moncrieff’s popular farce of “Monsieur Tonson.” On the nights when he appeared in the regular way, the houses were thinly attended. When he gave his “At Home,” they were filled to

suffocation. In the farce of "Monsieur Tonson," the part of *Morbleu* had been originally personated with great success by Montague Talbot, a favourite of long standing in the Dublin company, and still remembered by the patriarchs of the expiring generation.* During the first scene, when Mathews was beginning already to make a favourable impression, some half-dozen malcontents in the gallery raised a cry of "Talbot! Talbot!" which operated like an epidemic, and was speedily caught up by a few more. Mathews paused, appeared astonished, and at length said, "I hear a cry of 'Talbot! Talbot!' but I am unable to follow the meaning." "We want Talbot," was the reply. "You may have him," muttered the indignant actor, *sotto voce*, bowed, and walked off the stage, under considerable excitement.

* Talbot was a gentleman of good family and education, and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. His *forte* lay in light comedy and Frenchmen; but his attempts in tragedy were ineffective. He is greatly lauded in Croker's "Familiar Epistles," where it is said of him:—

"By art and nature chastely fit
To play the gentleman or wit;
Not Harris's nor Colman's boards,
Nor all that Drury Lane affords,
Can paint the rakish *Charles* so well,
Give so much life to *Mirabel*;
Or show, for light and airy sport,
So exquisite a *Doricourt*."

Talbot was the original *Rezevelt* in "De Montfort," at Drury Lane; a character unsuited to him, and in which he made little impression. In his decline, his notions of acting had become "very peculiar." Amongst other eccentricities, he discharged the duties of the *Ghost* in "Hamlet" with tin eyes, fastened over his own, to do away with speculation, and a sort of revolving, ambulant motion, under the idea that an immaterial, disembodied spirit should not stand as if fixed to earth, but float ethentially. More than one *Hamlet* has been sadly disconcerted by this strange demeanour of his father's spirit. In 1826, Talbot's partizans concocted the last of the Dublin "Rows," which lasted several nights, the object being to compel Mr. Henry Harris, the manager, to engage him contrary to his wishes.

The interruption then increased to an uproar. The manager came forward, and stated that his friend Mr. Mathews was merely there for a short engagement, to serve and oblige him ; that he performed, as a matter of course, his usual round of characters ; and that he was not come to displace Mr. Talbot, or succeed to his position. This address was received with universal acclamations, which redoubled when Mathews entered, immediately afterwards, and resumed his character. But, in a few moments, the mischievous spirits again shouted "Talbot! Talbot!" Mathews, never the most patient of men, now lost his temper entirely. He came forward and said, with brusque irritation, "Either you want to see this farce, or you do not ; so make up your minds at once. If I am interrupted again by this cry of 'Talbot! Talbot!' I shall relieve you from my performance ; but it is rather too good, after having acted this part with universal applause in London and all the principal theatres in England, to come here and be annoyed by you and your Talbot." It was thought he had now committed himself beyond recovery, and would be pelted off ; but the audience suddenly veered round to the humorous point, took it all in good part, and there was no more "Talbot!" during the remainder of the engagement. A theatre has been sacked upon less provocation. But Mathews visited Dublin no more, and never forgot the affront. To all subsequent applications he replied laconically, "Talbot, Talbot."

The celebrated gallery of theatrical portraits which now graces the walls of the "Garrick Club," was originally formed by Charles Mathews. These pictures he collected with great taste and perseverance, and without any regard to the cost of such an expensive hobby-horse. For years they constituted the pride of his existence, and comforted him under many disap-

pointments. This is the only complete series of the kind ever formed, and devoted to one exclusive subject. For those (and there are many) who delight to live on retrospection, and to multiply present enjoyments by a revival of the past, they possess a charm irrelevant of and superior to their pretensions as works of art; and a power over the imagination and feelings which can be felt more easily than described. We may sit or stand for hours in dreamy abstraction, looking on the familiar faces and costumes which have so often thrilled the soul with high-wrought sentiment, or convulsed the faculties with immoderate mirth, until they step from their frames in animated reality, surround us in a band, and carry us far away into the realms of fancy. We persuade ourselves that we hear, and are mingling with the social intercourse, the lively green-room gossip, the professional jealousies, the sparkling jest, the biting sarcasm, or the pungent anecdote. The little, busy world becomes instinct with life, variety, and conflicting passions. These musings are as salutary as they are delightful; and, like the sleeping *Caliban*, when enjoying visions of pleasant sights and sounds, we are almost ready to weep on awakening from them.

The number of pictures collected by Mathews amounted to 388, according to the printed catalogue. In the original purchase he sunk nearly 5,000*l*. He built a room expressly for their accommodation, at his residence, Ivy Cottage, Kentish Town, and took much delight in showing them to his friends. He was frequently bored by vapid, unmeaning curiosity-hunters, many of them perfect strangers, who almost forced themselves in, and would have scarcely left him an hour to himself, had he admitted them all. But nothing afforded him more pleasure than to exhibit his gallery to friends, or even simple

acquaintances, who were attracted by true taste, and a rational desire to see what was known and admitted to be one of the lions of the day. Mrs. Mathews says, in her Memoirs of her husband:—"So many came, whom to reject would have been personally mortifying to us, that our peaceful retreat was converted almost into a fatigue to us, too often having all the character of a show-place (from which I pray heaven to defend me!) where we lived more for others than for ourselves."

When the pressure of circumstances compelled Mr. Mathews to break up his suburban establishment and live in London, it became absolutely necessary to part with the pictures. He could not endure the idea of their dispersion. The Garrick Club, it was said, *ought* to have them. Pleased with the idea of seeing them kept as an unbroken collection, where he could still look at his old associates whenever he felt inclined, the transfer was proposed at 3,000*l.*; but the sum which the finances of the club at that time enabled them to offer, was so small (about one-fifth of the original cost), that the idea of their disposal was for the present wholly given up. The owner was then strongly advised to exhibit them, to which with reluctance he consented, thinking their deserved popularity would assist and enhance the ultimate sale. It was well that he contemplated no immediate gain. In May, 1833, the exhibition was opened to public view, the price of admittance being one shilling. When the accounts were closed at the end of the period announced, it was found that the loss exceeded 140*l.* Thus it became evident, upon an unanswerable arithmetical calculation, that the troublesome curiosity, the rabid appetite of thousands, had been excited more by a desire to see the unrivalled Mathews, than Mathews' unrivalled show. When the original proprietor and

collector died, in 1835, his widow sold the pictures to Mr. John Rowland Durrant, the well-known and wealthy stock-broker, who purchased them for the Garrick Club, they paying him five per cent. interest until convenient to reimburse the capital. At his death, he bequeathed them as a free legacy to the club; and thus they are permanently fixed (with many subsequent and valuable additions) in the most eligible of all resting places, which appears as if specially provided for their reception, and secured against the probability of being diminished or dispersed.

In the course of the season of 1836, Mr. Bunn introduced to the London public, in Drury Lane, the renowned hero of the buskin from America, Edwin Forrest. He came out in a native tragedy, written by Dr. Bird, of New York, entitled, the “Gladiator”—a sort of “raw-head and bloody-bones” affair, with here and there a vigorous passage approaching to poetry. But the hero, *Spartacus*, well suited the physical attributes of his representative. Forrest had a noble, muscular figure, with stentorian lungs. He might have stood for a model of the Farnesean Hercules. When commanded in the arena to kneel to the consul by the attendant officer, and he replied indignantly—

“Kneel thou whose craven soul was form'd for crouching ;
I am here to FIGHT !”

every one present felt that the athletic individual before them splendidly embodied the purpose for which he was produced. When called forward at the end of the play, to receive the congratulations of the audience, he thanked them very warmly for his reception, not only on his own account, but on the part of his friend, the author of the “Gladiator.” But Mr. Bull gave him distinctly to understand that the welcome was intended for himself

personally, and that the compliment by no means included the literary importation.

Forrest was a bold, rough, manly actor, always in earnest, though frequently incorrect in his Shakespearean readings. His curse in *Lear* was tremendous, and his sustained palsy natural, though painful to an extreme degree. His dialect was occasionally tinged by American provincialisms, and he was too confirmed in his elocution and style—too dogmatic in temperament to alter or improve by London experience. Had he been brought up in a good classic school of acting, there was that within him which would have placed his name high in the foremost list. He lost much in the estimation of all well-thinking people, by going into the boxes of the Edinburgh theatre, after the termination of his own engagement, and hissing Mr. Macready during his performance of *Hamlet*. If he disliked the "*pas de mouchoir*," as he chose to call it, in the third act, good taste might have suggested to him to refrain from any public expression of his contempt for the conceptions of a brother actor. But our transatlantic brethren have very bewildered notions of etiquette or delicacy.

The death of the facetious George Colman, in October, 1836, opened to Mr. Charles Kemble the appointment of "Examiner of Plays," to which office he succeeded through his personal interest with the then Lord Chamberlain, the Marquis Conyngham. A better selection could not have been made. Charles Kemble was a fine scholar, an experienced artist, well versed in all the arcana of theatrical business, a dramatic author himself, and an accomplished gentleman in every sense of the word. But the post was incompatible with his position as an actor still before the public. He therefore determined to retire, and went through a round of his favourite characters, winding up on the 3d of December, with

Benedick, in which he had long been without a competitor. On the 24th of March, 1840, he returned to the stage for five nights, at the express desire, it was said, of her present gracious Majesty. The characters he appeared in were *Don Felix*, *Mercutio*, *Benedick*, *Charles Surface*, and, finally, *Hamlet*, which really closed his theatrical career on the 10th of April. These performances produced enormous receipts, but the revived actor gave his services gratuitously, and thereby rendered considerable service to the theatre in which his brother had sunk a large sum of money for a very unprofitable return. Charles Kemble lived to a good age, dying so recently as the 12th of November, 1854, when he was within a few days only of completing his seventy-ninth year. He was by much the youngest of the gifted race, and being intended for one of the learned professions was sent at a very early age, by his brother John, to the same continental seminary at which he had himself been educated—the English college at Donay. He afterwards obtained a situation in the Post-office; but finding the duties irksome, unintellectual, and monotonous, resolved to follow the family bent, and try his fortunes on the stage. He came out as *Malcolm*, in “*Macbeth*,” in 1794. His progress was slow. For several seasons he was considered little better than a walking gentleman; but, by time and perseverance, he succeeded in placing himself in the highest rank. Through a mistaken ambition when managerial power enabled him to do as he pleased, he constantly thrust himself before the public in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*. In these, and the loftiest wall of heavy tragedy, he never soared beyond respectability while in *Romeo*, *Macduff*, *Edgar*, and *Cassio*, he evinced an excellence which no other actor ever contested. In his own line, a more elegant and finished performer never graced the boards. Those who remember hi

in the full vigour of his manly beauty, in such parts as *Faulconbridge*, *Marc Antony*, *Jaffier*, *Benedick*, *Mirabel*, *Mercutio*, *Charles Surface*, and *Don Felix*, have seen specimens of acting in the best school, never surpassed, and which they may despair of seeing approached in these "fast" days, when the young aspirants of the stage hold themselves superior to the trammels of study, experience, or example, and expect to achieve sudden fame and fortune by a sort of impromptu inspiration.

In 1837 the stage lost John Liston, of whom it may be said in the words of Ariosto, "*Natura lo fece e poi ruppe la stampa*," — Nature after compounding that ineffable physiognomy broke the mould. No human visage, no, not even Munden's, ever resembled or came up to the rich comic powers of Liston's. Heraclitus could not have looked upon that marvellous assemblage of features without being moved to laughter, while the proprietor himself would have remained imperturbable. His great and distinguishing excellence lay in the ease and apparent unconsciousness of effort with which he convulsed an audience. There was no hard straining, no deep delving for a joke which came up by reluctant instalments and produced a consumptive half-strangled laugh, dying in its own echo. The image is somewhat laboured like the humour it deprecates.

Liston was originally a pedagogue of humble pretensions, a teacher's assistant in a day-school. How is it possible to fancy boys looking seriously for a moment on that magazine of fun which his countenance must ever have exhibited! By some strange infatuation he imagined himself destined to excel in the heroes of tragedy, and was not a little mortified when on benefit nights he played *Romeo* and *Octavian* in sober seriousness, and the audience insisted on receiving them as burlesques. George IV. encored him from the

royal box in *Mawworm's* sermon, which ever afterwards stamped that unbecoming mummery with a singular reputation and a similar call. It appears strange that the laughter-loving public of Dublin should never have fully understood or tasted the humour of Liston. It was a complete mystery to them, although they are (or rather were) entirely compounded of humour; they neither enjoyed the style nor the pieces written for its peculiar illustration. Being invited in 1832 to make a farewell visit to the Irish metropolis:—"No," replied he, "they have seen me for the last time; they don't laugh at my jokes; they hiss all my new pieces, and I am rich enough not to expose myself to unnecessary mortification." His last appearance in Dublin was in the latter part of 1824, under the management of his friend William Abbott, when he felt so vexed at his cold reception, that he declared he would never come again, and kept his word. Liston died on the 22d of March, 1846, aged sixty-nine, in the possession of a handsome fortune—the natural consequence of living within a large income, and of never having been led to engage in any hazardous speculations.

Another rich comedian, John Reeve, but of a class and character quite distinct from Liston, died within two years after him, on the 24th of January, 1848. He was more of a droll than a legitimate or classical actor, and excelled in burlesque. He had only entered on his fortieth year. Habits of free living proved his bane, and brought him to an early tomb; his style was somewhat coarse and exuberant, but it must be admitted that he was the personification of fun, jollity and good humour.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLES KEAN MAKING RAPID GROUND IN THE PROVINCES—CORRESPONDENCE WITH MR. MACREADY RELATIVE TO AN ENGAGEMENT AT COVENT GARDEN—ENGAGES WITH MR. BUNN—APPEARS AS HAMLET AT DRURY LANE—UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS—WARM EULOGIUMS OF THE LEADING PAPERS—CONTRAST OF POSITION AND PROSPECTS BETWEEN 1827 AND 1838.

FROM 1833 to the close of 1837, Charles Kean steadily pursued the course he had laid down for himself; his eye was ever on the metropolis, but the road through which he expected to reach it once more had many windings, and he resolved to traverse them with patience, and not to jump hastily at any opportunity, no matter under how specious a form it might present itself. He now approached the culminating point of his theatrical life—the apex, as it might be called, of his career. He had achieved great marvels in the country; his hold on all the leading provincial theatres was well secured, and, to a certain extent, he was perfectly independent of London. But still London success was the key-stone of his ambition, the crowning glory to which he aspired. The time had come when the question was to be decided whether he had formerly been held down by prejudice, or really had not the abilities by some so pertinaciously denied to him. He was twenty-seven years of age, and had served an arduous apprenticeship of more than ten years. He was now to take his degree permanently amongst the masters of his craft, or to sink for ever

into the ranks of mediocrity. His enemies (and they were numerous, as well as pertinacious) loudly predicted his failure. To use their own favourite and elegant expression, he was nothing but a "lucky humbug," trading on his name and resemblance to his father. "Let him only face a London audience," said they, "and he will be found out at once." If *they* were right, all the audiences in the principal theatres throughout the kingdom, all the provincial press, were in a conspiracy to be wrong. His many friends, on the other hand, were equally confident of his triumph. Mr. Macready had entered on the management of Covent Garden in 1837; he was naturally anxious to secure all the strength he could muster, and invited Charles Kean to enter under his standard. The views of both are clearly set forward in the correspondence which took place between them:—

"8, Kent Terrace, Regent's Park,

"London, July 22d, 1837.

"To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,—

"The newspapers may, perhaps, have informed you that I have taken Covent Garden Theatre. I have embarked in this hazardous enterprise, congenial neither to my habits nor disposition, in the hope of retrieving, in some measure, the character of our declining art, or at least of giving to its professors the continuance of *one* of our national theatres, as a place for its exercise, which most persons despaired of. The performers have met the sacrifice I am prepared to make, with a spirit highly laudable to their feelings and I trust the event will prove not discreditable to their judgment. Every one has consented to a reduction of his or her claims, and I believe the names of

all our principal artists are entered on my list. Your celebrity has, of course, reached me; in the most frank and cordial spirit, I invite you to a participation in the struggle I am about to make. I understand that your expectations are high; let me know your terms, and, *if it be possible*, I will most gladly meet them, and do all in my power to secure your assistance, and give the completest scope to the full development of your talents.

“I will not further allude to the cause for which I am making this effort, than to express my belief and confidence that your own disposition will [so far suggest to you its professional importance, as to insure us against any apprehension of your becoming an antagonist, should you decline (as I sincerely trust you will not) enrolling yourself as a co-operator.

“I remain, dear Sir.

“Very faithfully yours,

“W. C. MACREADY.”

“Cork, July 27, 1827.

“To W. C. MACREADY, Esq.

“DEAR SIR,—

“I have had the honour to receive your very courteous letter; and permit me, before I answer that portion of it which relates to myself, to congratulate you on the assumption of the Covent Garden management.

“I assure you, with great sincerity, I think it a most fortunate circumstance for the drama and the public, that you have placed yourself at the head of this theatre, and that you occupy a position where your energies will sustain, your taste improve, and your influence elevate the stage. No one could be more

fitly chosen to preside where you do now. I say this without hesitation, and distinctly; because, from your well-understood predilection for our classical plays, and your own range of parts, you will give those plays every possible preference; and thus (to use your own words), 'retrieve in some measure the character of our declining art.' Connected as you now are with Covent Garden, controlling its business, and set over its destinies, allow me to wish you, for your own sake, and that of the profession, a long term of prosperous management.

"For your offer to me of an engagement, and your assurances of giving 'ample scope to the full development of my talents,' I thank you very much. Your invitation, and the kind and handsome manner in which you offer it, are most flattering to me; and though neither my inclination nor my interests point to London just now, still I set due value upon your encouraging proposal. But, let me tell you *frankly*, that, *were* I to go to London, there have occurred some circumstances between Mr. Bunn and me, whereby he might hold me bound (were it only partially so) to *him*; and even in a case where a contract was perhaps but *implied*, if Mr. Bunn made it a question of *honour* with me, I should, of course, be governed by the absolute and arbitrary dictate of such a monitor. I repeat, however, I do not contemplate a movement towards London for the present.

"Another point in your letter demands a few words. You express your confidence that my own disposition will so far suggest to me the professional importance of your present enterprise, as to insure you against my becoming an antagonist elsewhere, should I decline your offer to co-operate with yourself. You may indeed believe that I *could not*, neither *would* I, oppose myself to the interests of any establishment or any individual.

But surely you could never suppose that my acceptance of an engagement at any time, with any manager of the other great theatre, would involve hostility to you. The interests of both the national theatres are alike important to the public. I should naturally consider my own advantage in connecting myself with either, consistently with my rank in the drama, and its welfare generally; and were I to assent to your idea of the case, I should necessarily shut myself out of a large sphere of action; I might deprive myself of those professional associations I most valued; I should, in fact, compromise my professional freedom and independence; and it does not belong to the proud eminence you have yourself attained, to narrow my efforts in working out my individual fame. I labour hard in my profession, and, in doing this, if I can in any way, or at any season, contribute to your success, while honourably zealous for my own, it will gratify my feelings and my heart.

“I remain, dear Sir,

“Truly yours,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

“Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,

“August 2d, 1837.

“TO CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR,—

“I beg my observations may not be considered in the light of a desire to limit you in any way. I intended to convey to you my intention to concede as liberal terms as I supposed either you could demand, or any manager, with the means or purpose of paying you, could grant. Any expectation founded on such an intention was not meant to make a part of

the *business* of my letter. In inviting you to London, I fulfil a duty that devolves on me with my office, and I do so in the most frank and liberal spirit.

“I shall regret your absence, should you think it right to reject my overtures; and with my very cordial thanks for the kind expressions of your letter,

“I remain, dear Sir,

“Yours truly,

“W. C. MACREADY.”

In this correspondence, conducted with marked courtesy on either side, we find it difficult to understand why Mr. Macready fell into the diplomatic error of expecting from Charles Kean a promise or pledge that if he declined coming to him, he would at least abstain from going elsewhere. It was false policy without the chance of success; as the other, unless he were insane, would surely pay no heed to such a suggestion. He judged that, according to the plan laid down by Mr. Macready, it could not possibly come within his views to place him in the exclusive position at which he had so long aimed. He, therefore, paused to deliberate well before he hazarded the London venture, and finally closed with the offer of Mr. Bunn, to act twenty nights, at Drury Lane, with a salary of 50*l.* per night. That he decided wisely in preferring an arena entirely unoccupied, was evidenced in the most conclusive manner by the result. Had he fallen into the ranks at Covent Garden, he might have proved a valuable recruit, but he would never have risen to a truncheon of command.

On the 8th of January, 1838, he appeared as *Hamlet*,—a memorable evening in his own history—with a triumphant issue, never surpassed in the history of the stage.

The play was cast thus :

Claudius, King of Denmark . . .	MR. BAKER.
Hamlet	MR. CHARLES KEAN.
Polonius	MR. DOWTON.
Laertes	MR. KING.
Horatio	MR. H. COOKE.
Rosencrantz	MR. F. COOKE.
Guildenstern	MR. DURUSET.
Osric	MR. BRINDAL.
First Actor	MR. MC IAN.
Second Actor	MR. T. MATTHEWS.
First Gravedigger	MR. COMPTON.
Second Gravedigger.	MR. HUGHES.
Ghost of Hamlet's Father . . .	MR. COOPER.
Gertrude, Queen of Denmark . .	MRS. TERNAN.
Ophelia	MISS ROMER.

The house was crowded from orchestra to upper gallery. The new *Hamlet* was received with enthusiasm. From his entrance to the close of the performance the applause was unanimous and incessant. The celebrated "Is it the King?" in the third act, produced an electrical effect. To use a favourite expression of his father's, "*the pit rose at him.*"

At the conclusion he was called for, and hailed with reiterated acclamations. "Caps, hats, and tongues applauded him to the clouds." The success was solid, substantial. There was no array of hired *claqueurs*, no packing in the pit, no pre-arranged signals, no managerial influence to forestall or misrepresent unbiassed judgment. It was an honest verdict by an impartial jury. The day following, the most influential journals corroborated the opinion of the public. The articles were elaborately written with sound critical acumen, and with candour, kindness, and ability. The *Times** spoke thus:—

* Mr. Michael Nugent, at that time theatrical critic of the *Times*, and a writer of much experience, was the author of the article.

“After a very successful probation in the provinces, Mr. Charles Kean appeared last night again on these boards, where, a few years since, when a mere boy, he endeavoured to conciliate public favour. That was an immatured and ill-judged attempt, and, as might be expected, ended in failure. The mind of the play-going public was still filled with a vivid recollection of the transcendent talents of the elder Kean, who had temporarily retired, and however kind their feelings might be towards the young aspirant, they could not avoid showing their discontent at the incapacity of the *nominis umbra*, who thus early sought, or more probably, perhaps, was solicited, to vault from the school-room into the then vacant tragic chair. Defeated in the first instance, he did not abandon the profession. He laboured to improve himself, and subsequently appeared at Covent Garden and the Haymarket. At each of these theatres his exertions effected nothing for the manager in the way of money; nothing for the actor in the way of fame; still he was not disheartened. A long course in the provinces he thought would do him service. If he succeeded there, he felt that much of the trepidation and awe, which, before a London audience, in a great degree paralysed his powers, would be removed, and he would have a fair and honest hold on the feelings of those who came in a just and honest spirit to witness his performance. We like these strugglings against untoward circumstances. They speak the workings of a determined mind, which thinks, however the world may have been inclined to slight it, that there are within itself seeds not merely of talent but of genius. Thus much for the early efforts of Mr. Charles Kean.

“Now for what we may call his real *débüt*, when experience and judgment have come to the aid of his natural faculties, and made him, in one character certainly, that

of *Hamlet*, an accomplished, elegant, and, when the scene requires it, an energetic actor without bombast. Such we think were the leading features of his performance last night. He has taken a fine, philosophical view of the part. The groundwork is melancholy abstraction, sometimes diverted from its vein by the recollection of circumstances which elicit passion, or by the interference of court-flies, who sting a gallant nature to sarcasm and reproach by their sinister actions. The sombre hue of the character was well preserved by Mr. Kean, and those occasional bursts of tearful emotion which are directed by *Hamlet's* knowledge of his father's fate, and his own irresolution in not at once doing execution on the murderer, were finely contrasted with the prevailing melancholy.

Mr. Kean delivered the soliloquies with great feeling, and consequently with corresponding effect. We look, however, for his excellences in the more active scenes of the play. His rencontre with his father's spirit, where astonishment, awe, and reverence were commingled, was finely acted. The celebrated scene with *Ophelia* was well imagined, and was as well played before the audience. Here Mr. Kean was wholly different from any person we have ever before seen in the character. There was enough of violence in his manner to justify the grossly lascivious king in saying,

“Love ;—his affections do not that way tend ;”

but there was also enough of tenderness and delicacy to show to tenderer and more delicate minds that his very heart-strings were breaking, while in his assumed frenzy he was saying unkind things to one whom he entirely loved.

The closet scene with his mother was acted with great power. His attitude and look when, having slain

Polonius, he rushes in exclaiming "Is it the King?" fully deserved the immense applause which followed one of the most striking scenic exhibitions we have witnessed for a long time. In the play scene, Mr. Kean was good; but though at the conclusion he received much applause, there was less marking about it, less force, less power, than we have seen manifested by others. His last scene was very good. He fences not merely gracefully but skilfully. We need not say that the house was on this occasion crowded from the pit to the ceiling. The jury before whom Mr. Kean appeared was not a packed one. There was no indiscriminate applause. Assuredly where applause was given, and the instances were very frequent, it was well merited.

Looking to the whole of Mr. Kean's performance we are greatly pleased with it. It may, however, be rendered even better. His pauses are in many instances so long that he fails to make the point at which he is aiming. Again, he carries the weeping sentimentality of *Hamlet* into situations where he is a mere abstract speculator. The beautiful lines commencing, "Imperious Cæsar, dead and turned to clay," do not want tears to enforce their moral—the nothingness of defunct mortality.

Mr. Kean's reception was of the most cheering description. When he appeared, the applause from every part of the house was enthusiastic; and throughout the evening the same anxious wish to encourage (we hope now no longer struggling) merit was observable. At the conclusion of the tragedy he was loudly called for, and he made very gracefully his obeisance to a much delighted audience. He certainly has succeeded in giving a very elegant and finished portrait of *Hamlet*. What he will do with the *Richards* and *Macbeths* is yet to be proved. That he has mind for them we can

imagine, but yet we cannot speak with anything like decision of his physical powers."

The notice in the *Morning Post* ran thus:—"The old times of Drury seemed last night to have come back again. Never, in its most palmy days, did we witness a greater crowd—never more enthusiasm in an audience—and scarcely ever more success in a performance. It was gratifying to witness once more such a house assembled, to delight themselves with one of Shakespeare's plays, and that play, *Hamlet*—the most refined, perhaps, and most touching of them all. The house was crowded to the roof, and gave Mr. Charles Kean as warm a reception as it is possible to imagine that an actor could receive. He might well say, as his father did before him, that "the pit rose at him." But it was not the pit alone, but the whole house which rose, and by acclamations loud and long continued, by waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and by every possible demonstration of welcome, testified their gladness to see Mr. Kean, or (as his Irish friends would say), to see his father's son. From the beginning to the end Mr. Kean's performance was brilliantly successful. We never saw an audience which seemed better pleased, and though we do not hold this by any means an infallible criterion of an actor's merit, it is one upon which much dependence may generally be placed; and in the present case we think the decisive judgment of the audience was well borne out.

"We do not think, indeed, that the performance of Mr. Kean was without fault, or that all the parts of it which brought down great applause were entitled to the praise of the considerate and judicious; but, as a whole, the performance was striking, energetic, skilful, and undeformed by any such marked blemish as would mar this general impression in the mind of even the most

fastidious. Our readers are aware that there are two styles of performing *Hamlet*, which, like the two great divisions in the modern French literature of fiction, may be called the classic and the romantic. Within the memory of present audiences the late Mr. Kean was the most prominent representative of the *romantic* style; and the late actor—but we are happy to say the still-living private gentleman—Mr. Young, was the most distinguished professor of the *classic* style. We shall not now enter upon the controversy as to which of the two general modes of performance ought to be preferred; both have undoubtedly their excellences, and both their defects. An even, uniform performance, however well considered, however dignified in its energy and delicate in its pathos, may be said to be scarcely applicable to one whom Shakespeare certainly intended should exhibit strong contrasts:—

“ This is mere madness,
And thus awhile the fit will work on him.
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,
His silence will sit drooping.”

On the other hand, the imagination of most readers of sensibility has been so apt to associate the character of *Hamlet* with melancholy meditation, that persons of a pensive temperament are almost offended at any departure from the serious dignity and philosophic scenes which are the prevailing characteristics of *Hamlet*. He is the man so weary of the world and its sin that he wishes he was dead—who looks upon all the uses of this world as weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. In this key is the character pitched; and however airy, fantastical, satirical, may be its occasional flights, to this deep note of melancholy does it ever return, and we feel

that he has that within, of killing grief, 'that passeth show.'

"Of Mr. Charles Kean's performance we should say that he tries to combine the two styles to which we have alluded; but he is an hereditary actor, and his nature leads him to the *romantic*. That style materially preponderates. He has evidently studied much, as well as gained much experience, since he last appeared in London, and the result has been remarkable improvement. In height, in gait, in expression of countenance, and especially in voice, he bears the strongest resemblance to his father. We should not say that the features of his face are like his father's, or so good; but the shape of the forehead is the same—the piercing dark eye is the same—and, above all, the voice, husky in its energy, and soft, distinct, and clear in its lower and more subdued tones—is exactly that of his father. There were many passages—not those, we confess, which we liked best—in which the mannerisms of the old favourite were so vividly brought to mind, that the house rang again with applause. Indeed, it struck us occasionally that the audience were determined to enjoy two poets on the one evening—that Rogers as well as Shakespeare had something to do with their delight, and 'The Pleasures of Memory,' as well as 'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,' occupied their attention, and contributed to their satisfaction.

"We believe that, at the very commencement, Mr. C. Kean was somewhat overwhelmed with the enthusiasm of his reception; and the extreme slowness of his enunciation, together with a certain tremulousness which may not have been intended, threw an expression of grief—almost sobbing grief—into his first speeches that the best interpreters of the character have not, we think, contemplated. *Hamlet* speaks, indeed, of the 'fruitful

river in the eye,' as one of the shows of grief to which the *Queen* had referred, but it is scarcely consistent with his appearing in public at all that he should then, while speaking, be almost weeping too. Mr. Kean's soliloquies though well delivered, are not the happiest parts of his performance: and it was not until the interview with *Horatio*, *Marcellus*, and *Bernardo*, in which the appearance of the *Ghost* is related to him, that the spirit of the actor fairly showed itself. The

‘ In my mind's eye, *Horatio*,’

which was, indeed, most like Edmund Kean's manner of delivering that passage, was loudly applauded; and thenceforward, through all the action of the play similar applause was elicited. It struck us that nothing could be more admirable than the conception of Mr. Kean's performance when his companions find him after his interview with the *Ghost*. He played it as if when first speaking to them of secrecy he had intended to tell them all that he had heard, and with that intention begins,—

‘ There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark,’

but then, suddenly remembering the prudence of keeping his own secret, he turns it off with—

‘ But he's an arrant knave.’

Mr. Kean paused between these two lines, and delivered the second in quite an altered tone.

“ The third act is the great trial of a performer in *Hamlet*, and Mr. Kean came well through that trial. Not that we think the famous soliloquy beginning, ‘ To be or not to be,’ was given as well as Mr. Young used to give it; but from that forward the performance throughout the act was admirable, unless we should

except what seemed to us a much too rapid delivery of that most Shakespearian passage :—

‘ I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me : I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious ; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth ! We are arrant knaves, all ; believe none of us.’

“ This was hurried over with such rapidity that the quickest ears could scarcely follow the words. But the speech to the players was given with delightful ease and nature. The intensity with which he regarded the *King* at the play, and the exulting conviction with which he leaped up as the *King* bursts away, conscience-struck, from the scene, were also most natural and vivid ; and the whole of the scene with his mother was a triumph of bold, vigorous, judicious, and delicate acting. The voice of anxious inquiry—the attitude—the depth of eager expression with which, when returning from slaying *Polonius* behind the arras, he asks,—

‘ Is it the King ? ’

was as successful as any piece of performance we ever saw.

“ In the dying scene we thought there was rather a needless protraction of the hideous pantomime of dissolution. *Prince Hamlet* died rather too elaborately, especially as Mr. Kean had presently after to appear before the curtain, to receive the renewed shouts of applause, and to witness once more all manner of encomiastic gesticulation. We learned after we had left the theatre—we own to our very great astonishment—that Mr. Kean had certainly never seen his father play *Hamlet*. We should have concluded from his performance that he must have seen him represent the character often. Upon the whole, the performance of last night at Drury

Lane was, in technical phrase, so decided a *hit* that we apprehend few who ever go to a theatre at all will be satisfied without seeing it, and we expect that the engagement of Mr. Kean will be of the utmost advantage to the establishment."

The tone of the *Globe* was equally laudatory with that of the *Post*, but the respective critics differed a little in their estimate of particular points. The *Globe* said:—

"The second *avatar* of Mr. Charles Kean took place last night, when the rich promise given by the crude efforts of his boyhood was amply redeemed. The reports which have for some time past reached us from the provinces, had prepared the public mind for a more than ordinary display of talent, and the house, in consequence, was so full that the management, we conceive, are now able to calculate to a fraction what it will contain. Nothing could be more cheering than the first reception given to the *débutant* (for in this light we consider him): the applause lasted full three minutes by 'our stop watch,' and seemed to act powerfully on the object of it, as the first few words he had to utter were tremulous and indistinct. This agitation, however, was but momentary, and *Hamlet* was 'himself again.' Minutely to criticise the performance of such a character would carry us into a wider field than our limits would afford; but as all our readers are familiar with the part, it will be sufficient for us to mention a few of the chief excellences (for most excellent Mr. Kean's personation was throughout) displayed on this occasion; and we content ourselves with so doing, the rather that, unquestionably every admirer of Shakespeare will take an early opportunity of judging, in this instance, for himself.

"Mr. Kean's conception of the part was good; th

melancholy abstraction, the vacillation, the derangement of 'a noble mind o'erthrown,' partly affected and partly real, were finely delineated. In the first scene with the *Ghost*, he reminded us much of his father; it was, however, no servile imitation, but evidently a similarity of conception similarly embodied. The interview with his mother in her closet, too, was admirably sustained, and the effect of his exclamation, 'Is it the King?' electrical. If, however, we were to analyze minutely Mr. Kean's performance, we should not hesitate to give the palm to the soliloquies. In the first place, they were real soliloquies, and not a sort of '*asides*' to the pit, as is too generally the case. In that fine burst of indignation at his own want of firmness—'O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!' he was eminently successful, and with great good taste restored many of those brilliant lines of the poet which fashion or convenience has of late years banished from the speech. The scene with *Ophelia* was well worked out, though he received but little support from her fair representative, whose excellence was confined to the musical part of the character. In the fencing match his elegance and skill were displayed to great advantage. We need scarcely add, that Mr. Kean was called for, and cheered with the greatest enthusiasm, at the fall of the curtain. It was impossible that his triumph could have been more complete, and we take our leave of him for the present, with the sincerest congratulations upon his success—a success which has stamped his character, and made his fortune."

It refreshes the spirit to read these honest, straightforward expressions of opinion, from men who, while they knew how to criticise, wrote without a bias, and felt what they described. We have selected the extracts from many of the same tone, and could multiply them

readily, but too much space would be occupied, and enough are given to show that the impression of this first performance was most flattering to the actor, and fully vindicated the judgment of his friends. Had he been endowed with the united ambition of Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon, his loftiest aspirations must have been more than realized by the result of the 8th of January, 1838. Far different were the feelings of his mother and himself, when, on the morning following, their breakfast-table was strewn with the encomiums of the leading journals, from that deep mortification with which they had been overwhelmed ten years before from the same source which now conferred their happiness. Presently, there arose a few dissentient cavillers, but their censure passed unheeded and innocuous amidst the overwhelming torrent of approbation.

CHAPTER XV.

COMPLIMENTARY AND CRITICAL LETTERS.

THERE could now no longer be any doubt as to the position Charles Kean was thenceforward to hold. His place in the foremost rank of his profession was established. He had received the diploma for which he had so ardently toiled. His performances were continued for forty-three nights with undiminished attraction, and would have been protracted to a much longer period without intermission, but that a previous engagement in Edinburgh interfered, and compelled his temporary absence from London. Increased terms were offered to him if he could effect a compromise, by which that absence might be suspended. He felt the full disadvantage of the break, but determined not to disappoint his northern friends, to whom he was under many obligations.

Attentions were now lavished on him from every side—his society was courted by persons of the highest rank—his desk literally groaned beneath the weight of cards, invitations, and congratulatory letters. From the latter, a few selections may not be considered inappropriate:—

From LADY MORGAN.

“ 6, Stafford Row, Buckingham Palace,
“ Jan. 10th, 1838.

“ MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“ I trust I am amongst the *earliest*, as I am certainly amongst the *sincerest*, to congratulate you on a success

which I prophesied. I am so blind that I shall reserve further observations and congratulations till we meet, which I trust will be soon. Sir Charles and myself will be delighted to see you, at present in Stafford Row, and in a few days, more comfortably in our own house, which is at present in the hands of the workmen. We are always at home from two till five. Alas! for our poor Duchess!* How proud she would have been of your triumph. Tell Mrs. Kean I envy her her feelings. How far sweeter is the success of those we love, than our *own*, I can well tell. With Sir Charles and my niece's best compliments,

“My dear Mr. Kean,

“Most truly yours,

“SYDNEY MORGAN.

P.S. “I confide this to the most worthy two-penny, as I am ignorant of your address, and my footman is Irish.”

From LADY BURDETT.

“LADY BURDETT's compliments to Mr. Kean, and begs to offer him her very best congratulations on his distinguished success on his first appearance last evening.

“St. James's Place, Tuesday, Jan. 9th, 1838.”

From LADY BLAKENEY.

“Royal Hospital, Dublin,

“Jan. 18th, 1828.

“MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“It is impossible to express how much gratified both Sir Edward and myself have been by hearing of your

* The Duchess of St. Alban's, one of Mr. C. Kean's steadiest friends and patronesses, who had died five months before, on the 6th August, 1837.

complete and unbounded success in London. We have read the newspapers with the greatest pleasure, containing, as they all do, such delightful accounts of your reception and triumph. Had it been otherwise, we should have been greatly surprised, feeling how deeply indebted we, and all your numerous friends in Dublin, have frequently been to you, in witnessing your splendid talents. That prosperity, health, and happiness may ever attend you, is, my dear Mr. Kean, Sir Edward's and my most sincere prayer, and believe me,

"Very sincerely yours,

"MARY BLAKENEY."

From the late GENERAL SIR G. D'AGUILAR.

"Dublin, 13th Jan. 1838.

"MY DEAR KEAN,—

"I congratulate you with all my heart on the brilliant success of your *debüt*. You must never complain of the Press again. Take it all in all I think it is most laudatory. I like the *Times* critique best. To be 'an accomplished, elegant, and energetic actor of Hamlet, without bombast,' is the highest praise.

"I am full of business at this moment, but I cannot refrain from sending you this line, and requesting you to make my best respects acceptable to your good mother, whose existence will, I trust, be lengthened by many years more of pleasure and of pride.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"GEORGE D'AGUILAR.

"Have you seen Mr. Bulwer?"

From LORD VISCOUNT MORPETH, *now* EARL OF CARLISLE.

"Jan. 9, 1838.

"MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

"As one not the least interested amongst that crowded and fervid audience which witnessed your appearance last night, allow me to wish you joy on its complete and unequivocal success, and on the entire self-mastery and command of your powers, which you exhibited under circumstances naturally trying. Do not trouble yourself to acknowledge this, but accept my most cordial wishes for your welfare in every possible respect.

"I am,

"Your faithful servant,

"MORPETH."

From EDWARD GOULBURN, ESQ.

"21, Park Street, or Serjeant's Inn,

"Chancery Lane.

"Friday, Jan. 12, 1838.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"When at Brighton, I understood that you would have been good enough to let me know when your appearance in London was to take place. I truly, however, rejoice to hear (as I do from all quarters) of its entire success. I hear from my friend, Serjeant Talfourd, a most gratifying account.

"I am anxious to have the pleasure of making you known to him, and also to Lord Denman (for whom I was commissioned to procure a box to witness your performance), and I wish you would name some early day, or, perhaps, in order to secure their presence, two days, on which I could have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner, at my house, which, I need not add, would give me great gratification; and I hope on one of these to

find them disengaged, and able to meet you. I send this to Drury Lane, where I take it for granted it will find its way to your hands; and believe me, with hearty congratulations,

“Yours most sincerely,

“EDWARD GOULBURN.”

From SIR THOMAS DICK LAUDER, BART.

“The Grange House, Edinburgh,

“12th Jan. 1838.

“MY DEAR KEAN,—

“I hope I need not use many words to convince you how much delighted all in this family have been, by the agreeable intelligence we have heard of your triumphant appearance at Drury Lane. It comes upon us by no means as matter of surprise; for, in fact, it is no more than I have been all along most sanguinely anticipating—and I think that I do not now anticipate too much, when I say, that if it pleases God to spare you to a reasonable span of life, you will yet be reckoned the first actor since Garrick’s time. Instead of writing thus drily, with this abominable iron pen, I wish I was within reach of your hand, to give it such a hearty shake as my feelings at this moment would dictate. God bless you, and may your career from henceforward be as glorious as you deserve.

“I hope that we in the provinces are not to be cut out of our usual visit from you, because you have now climbed to the top of the tree. I long to see you again amongst us. I was at Howick lately, and had a long talk about *you* with Colonel Grey, as well as about all our old friends of the 71st. The Colonel is now in constant attendance at Windsor, and I think it looks

very like as if his corps was destined for Canada. What a delightful person Mrs. Grey is! I fell quite in love with her.

“I begin to think that it is a piece of great presumption in me to have ventured on such an intrusion as this at such a time, when no doubt millions of *billets doux* from fair damsels are brought to you every hour, and when it cannot be supposed that such an epistle as mine may hope for consideration. But treat it as you may, it is a poor offering, but an honest offering of the heart, and as such it deserves to be forgiven.

With our united best wishes and hearty congratulations, believe me,

“My dear Kean,

“Ever yours most sincerely,

“THOS. DICK LAUDER.”

From LORD MEADOWBANK.

“11, Hanover Terrace, Edinburgh,

“Thursday.

“MY DEAR KEAN,—

“I enclose you a copy of Lockhart’s letter, just as I received it. He said to me that he had no doubt you had the power of equalling any actor who had ever lived. He is, in short, as friendly a critic as you could have, but he is sometimes severe. Knowing well the London audience, his remarks are worth your having. In haste,

“Yours faithfully,

“A. MACONCHIE.”

From J. G. LOCKHART, ESQ. to LORD MEADOWBANK.*

“ London, Jan. 17th, 1838.

“ MY DEAR LORD,—

“ I saw young Kean in *Hamlet*, and was not disappointed in the main; though I did not recognize what had been described to me as the chief merit of his performance of that most difficult part; and I wish you, who have I believe very great authority with him, would caution him that, if he has altered what was so much admired in Scotland, from apprehension of his physical powers being inadequate to do full justice to his own conceptions, in our great theatres here, he is mistaken totally, and may incur a sad risk of marring his destiny. His whisper is as effective as ever Mrs. Siddons's was, and, though I was near, I think his features must tell equally at a distance, as the lines are cut with singular decision. I had been told that he was distinguished from other actors of *Hamlet* by his ordinary demeanour and tone being quiet, as certainly would best become a prince who had been ‘the glass of fashion,’ into whatever state of melancholy abstraction he might have fallen. Kean realized this admirably in his advice to the players, and I could not but think, ‘Oh, if he would but stick *throughout to his own rules as he now practises them!*

“ He injured, to my feeling sadly, the effect of his most beautiful scene on the battlements, by having previously given various parts with a too theatrical vehemence; and, in general, I thought he often uttered

* Many years editor of the *Quarterly Review*; the son-in-law, literary executor, and biographer of Sir Walter Scott. He was a caustic critic, very difficult to please, and full of strange conceits; but keen and shrewd withal.

with passionate gesticulation, what Shakespeare meant to be scarcely beyond a whisper. This must be the case with all soliloquies; and I take it the same rule holds as to all such involuntary expressions of desolate regret over youth and hope departed, as occur throughout *Hamlet*—nowhere more than in the lamentation over the loss of all power to see beauty in the external world. He acted that passage. I think he should have whispered it, with hardly a gesture, except to cast his eyes upwards to the ‘golden fires.’ Perhaps the truth is, however, that he attributes a more prominent madness to *Hamlet* than I take the poet to have designed. If so, I saw too well his deep study of the play, to be rash or bold in my dissent from his judgment. I can only speak my own feeling, and it was, that occasional uncalled for energy and violence disturbed the general effect of a very graceful and touching performance.

“He cannot know how infinitely superior the sweet, melancholy tones of his voice are to all the rest. His pathos and tenderness in many places were never excelled. He will never declaim like Kemble, but he may go beyond any actor I have seen in sober, simple, gentleness of effect, if he will—and I think rival any, even his father, in easy variety. I was much gratified; for, in truth, I never could see any merit in any tragedian of late years, and I thought I should never see any of Shakespeare’s higher parts done the least justice to again. I shall certainly go to see ‘Hamlet’ again very soon, and whatever of that file he takes up next. I am anxious especially for the *Macbeth* and the *Lear*. The theatre used to be one of my chief delights, and I feared it was lost to me for ever, like ‘many others.’ I think I may add that something of the general objections I have hinted, seemed to be felt by the ladies I was in company with, and they are, as he won’t deny,

the most delicate of all critics on matters of deportment and gesture.

"I hope Mr. C. Kean may have a long and prosperous career, and die with a fortune like Garrick's, and a character like John Kemble's.

"Ever truly yours,

"J. G. LOCKHART.

"P.S. Do you remember what Goëthe says—that Hamlet's sensibilities are like a rose-tree that has grown too big for its china vase?"

Some time after the date of the foregoing letter, when Charles Kean was balloted for, and admitted as a member of the Athenæum Club, Lockhart wrote the following note to Colonel Gore, one of the Committee:—

"Athenæum, March 21st.

"DEAR COLONEL,—

"Do be kind, and introduce young Kean as a child of the Committee, therein gratifying his high and laudable ambition; and showing your own skill in the recognition of true merits—professional, moral, and social.

"Yours most truly,

"J. G. LOCKHART."

From SERJEANT, *afterwards* JUDGE, TALFOURD.

"Temple, 29th Jan. 1838.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"The flattering terms in which you were so kind as to speak of my dramatic poem ('Ion') when I had the pleasure of meeting you on Saturday, encourage me to request your acceptance of one of the very few remaining copies of the unpublished edition, which in type and paper may be less unworthy a place in your library

than the play as printed for sale. I am proud that it should meet with any share of the approbation of one whose rich hereditary claims on the sympathy of the English people, have been superseded by the triumphs of his own genius, and who is entering on a brilliant career, which I trust will long be associated with the noblest efforts of the great writers of past times, and with the hopes and successes of those who may humbly seek to follow them.

“ Believe me, my dear Sir,

“ Very truly yours,

“ T. N. TALFOURD.”

“ 56, Russell Square,

“ 14th Feb., 1838.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—

“ If you should be disengaged on Saturday, the 24th, and can allow me the honour of your company at dinner, at a quarter before seven, I shall very highly esteem the favor of your company. As I shall leave town for the Circuit on Sunday or Monday following, I have not the opportunity of offering you a choice of days—mine being limited to Saturdays and Sundays—which otherwise I should prefer ; but I should be extremely sorry to postpone the pleasure of your society until after my return from my sad prosaic duties, and yours from the delightful welcome which I know awaits you in the beautiful city where your success was predicted and ensured. I have not yet been able to see you in *Richard*, but I rejoice to hear of your triumph from those on whom I can rely ; and I hope, before the day when I solicit the pleasure of seeing you at my house, to realize the picture they have given me.

“ Believe me, my dear Sir,

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ T. N. TALFOURD.”

From J. H. MERIVALE, ESQ.*

" Sunday, Feb. 26, 1838.

" MY DEAR KEAN,—

" I endeavoured to find you at the stage-door last night, to tell you how highly I had been gratified by your performance of the *Prince of Denmark*, which, I can safely assure you, in many points, I never saw personified so much in accordance with my own conception of the part as by yourself. But the porter did not know how to direct me to you, and seemed to think you had already either left the house, or adjourned to one of the private boxes. Herman was with me, and we were both in the pit, for the sake of seeing you to the best advantage. If I were to specify the parts of your performance that pleased me most, they are these: the first scene, in which the soliloquy 'Oh, that these,' &c., was spoken far more suitably, to what I judge to have been the poet's own intention, than by any other actor I have seen, not excepting your father or Kemble—the scene with the *Ghost*, which was full of strong and earnest feeling, and gave evident marks of original genius—and that with the *Queen Mother*. Those in which I fancied you less successful, and in which I think you may still greatly improve, are the scenes with *Ophelia* and with the *Gravediggers*. In the first, though much of it was well and strongly imagined, I thought you too harsh and abrupt, even for assumed madness. In the latter you appeared to me too solemn and

* The friend and schoolfellow of Lord Byron; a staunch advocate and wholesome adviser of Edmund Kean. Amongst other literary works he adapted to the stage the three parts of *Henry the Sixth*, under the title of *Richard Duke of York*, which was played with great effect by the elder Kean, at Drury Lane in 1819. Mr. Merivale translated the Greek *mythology* in conjunction with the Rev. Robert Bland, and wrote a poem called *Orlando in Roncesvalles*. He became subsequently a commissioner of the new Bankruptcy Court.

studied. The moralizing reflections on the skull, though prompted by deep feeling, and habits of philosophical thought, being intended to be rather sportively, or, if I may say so, whimsically, than sententiously or gravely uttered; especially the extravaganza of Cæsar stopping a beer barrel, which is a mere piece of grotesque work, like the grinning heads or faces on the roof of an old Gothic cathedral, and illustrating what is often met with in real life—a propensity to jest with one's own wretchedness. *You*, on the contrary, spoke it as if it was a grave sermon, than which nothing can be more unlike.

“Now will you show that you forgive me the freedom of these observations, by saying that you will come and take your dinner with us on Wednesday the 6th, or if you should be engaged on that day, on Friday, the 8th of March, at six o'clock, and let me know which it shall be.

“Yours very truly,

“J. H. MERIVALE.”

From SERJEANT ADAMS.

“Court of Exchequer,

“Nov. 17, 1836.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“Mrs. Adams has this morning sent me your message. I can quite understand your scene with *Laertes* in which I should have forgiven you, if you had displayed as much feeling, though of a different nature as you did with your *Queen Mother*. The case was desperate.

“I am inclined to trouble you with a few of my opinions on your *Hamlet*, because, as an old admirer of your father, and so nearly connected with the history of your family, they may derive a value in your eyes,

which they are not intrinsically entitled. *Hamlet* is a character which I have studied more deeply than any other in our immortal poet. I have seen every great actor who has appeared in it, from John Kemble downwards. I remember them all. The first characteristic of your performance is its originality. The second, its depth of feeling and pathos. Your conceptions on these points are so just, that they seem as if they were the real feelings of a youth called forth by actual circumstances. The only doubt I have is, whether a *prince*, accustomed to a court, would express them in a manner so true to nature. Your answer will be—they are expressed in solitude, where the prince gives way to the man.

“The whole of your scene with the *Ghost* is beyond praise. It had the same *truth*—it was the *son* awestruck by his father’s spirit. I observed that you adopted Young’s reading of ‘But you’ll reveal it,’ &c., which I am sure is the correct one. Are you quite at liberty to cut out ‘my tablets,’ &c.? It certainly makes the character harmonize better.

“With respect to the scene with *Ophelia*, I admit now that I never before thoroughly understood it. The clapping and banging the doors, and the maniac ravings of the old school, I always protested against; but I never could read the scene to my own satisfaction. Little was wanting here to render the illusion perfect. A noble mind obliged to feel that his mother has committed incest, and thinking that if *she* fails, all womankind must—distracted and unsettled, looks at the object of his love, and, with all the variety of passion so beautifully delineated, wishes to save her from the fate which he thinks awaits her, and to send her from the inevitable corruptions of the world into retirement. How different was your ‘Go to a nunnery, go,’ from the bullying tones of older days.

"The address to the players was very pleasing. I think in the play scene you somewhat over-acted the watching of the *King*, and were a little too *familiar* with *Ophelia*. You were from the beginning too confident of the *King's* guilt. *Hamlet*, you know, is confident of nothing. Doubt and irresolution are his besetting weaknesses. You began to move towards the *King* too soon. The whole of the subsequent part of the scene was excellent.

"Why did you curtail any part of the first beautiful soliloquy, 'Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,' &c.? I know it is usual, but I am sure it impairs the effect. I confess I was a little alarmed when you first appeared—you looked *vacant*, not *sorrowful*—and I wanted more expression, with a 'a little more than kin,' &c.; but the soliloquy redeemed it. I think I have seen the closet scene played to greater advantage. If I remember right, John Kemble's hand was always on his mother's arm, her eyes fixed on him—his own on the *Ghost*; and when the *Ghost* desired him to address her, he did so *mechanically* without looking at her, or moving a muscle.

"With the third act, my criticisms cease, as does the character of *Hamlet*. There certainly are some points in the last two acts, but they must fall flat with such a *Laertes*. In the grave scene it was like a kite pouncing upon a sparrow. The poor man looked as if he thought you were actually going to eat him. You have heard praises of your fencing too often to need any more.

"After this lengthened disquisition I should say—the conception of your *Hamlet* is splendid. That is, all those parts of the character in which the workings of the heart are to be portrayed; your exhibition of these is powerful and true to nature. But the same may also be said of your *filial* feelings, and especially of

your feelings for *Ophelia*; and that your faults are, that you are not enough of the prince—or somewhat deficient in the mixture of condescension and ease which marks the intercourse of a prince of kind and affable disposition with his inferiors. Those who are born to command, acquire a manner which never deserts them, even in their most familiar moments. You are always the *gentleman*, but not always the *prince*—*Hamlet* is *both*.

“I need not say how highly gratified I was with your performance, or how anxious, too, it made me to see your conception of other characters. If you preserve your present style of *playing to the pit and boxes*, you must continue to rise in public favour, in spite of all the minors and melodramas in the world.

“I have in these remarks avoided all allusion to your father. It was only occasionally that you reminded me of him, and I do not think they were the happiest parts of your performance—for *Hamlet* was not a character which particularly suited him.

“Pray make my best remembrances to Mrs. Kean, and excuse this hasty essay, which is written in Westminster Hall pending the argument in *Vandenhoff v. Bunn*.

“I am, my dear Sir,

“Yours faithfully,

“JOHN ADAMS.”

From LORD VISCOUNT MORPETH.*

“Nov. 8th, 1838.

“MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“I want to tell you, with my parting good wishes, that I think your recitation of a *continuous* passage

* Written in Dublin, on the conclusion of C. Kean's engagement here, after his London success.

very beautiful; and I mention this, because I fancy that you rather slight it yourself, in comparison with the more abrupt and jerking passages, which I cannot value so highly, but which I sometimes think you may learn to indulge from the splendour of hereditary recollections. I am more and more confirmed in wishing you to do some *lover* parts. I see you have all 'the arts of soft persuasion.' Excuse my intolerable presumption. May God bless you with success, and many better things.

“ Very sincerely yours,

“ MORPETH.”

It will be perceived that the notices and critical letters we have inserted, deal with Charles Kean as avowedly a master in his art, and one who by long service had vindicated his claim to the post he now occupied. They furnish, too, a diversified study of the complicated character, respecting which the best judges of dramatic literature have long been divided in opinion.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUED SUCCESS—RICHARD THE THIRD—SIR GILES OVERREACH—PUBLIC DINNER AND PRESENTATION OF A SILVER VASE, IN THE SALOON OF DRURY LANE THEATRE—ENGAGEMENT AT EDINBURGH—RESUMED PERFORMANCES IN LONDON—OTHELLO—COMMENCEMENT OF A HOSTILE CLIQUE—CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE COMPANY OF THE ENGLISH OPERA-HOUSE—WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE GENERAL THEATRICAL FUND—WITH THE BATH COMPANY.

WE have seen that the new performer's first London engagement ran on in one continuous stream of success, exceeding the number of nights originally proposed, and greatly to the reciprocal satisfaction of the public, the manager, and himself. But "*surgit amari aliquid*" even in life's most honied intervals. He was beset, from morning till night, by innumerable petitions for relief, from unemployed hangers-on of the stage, decayed actors and artists, and semi-genteel professional mendicants; claims from parties he had known and often assisted before; with demands, sometimes authoritatively urged, from others whose names and pretensions he had never heard mentioned. Between the 8th of January and the close of March, he received 2,100*l.*, and was asked to lend or bestow at least 6,000*l.*! These worthy applicants undoubtedly looked upon him as the public conduit of supply; and considered that having made a fortune in less than three months, he had nothing to do but to give it away again.

Within the period named above, Charles Kean appeared in only three different characters—*Hamlet*,

Richard the Third, and *Sir Giles Overreach*.* The first of these he acted twenty-one nights, twelve of which were without intermission. The following extract from Mr. Bunn's work, "The Stage Before and Behind the Curtain,"† supplies some interesting information, extracted from the account-books of the theatre, with respect to the receipts of that engagement, as compared with those of his father's first performances in 1814.

"In the first chapter of these volumes will be found a recapitulation of the receipts attracted by Mr. Kean, *senior*, on his *debüt* before a London audience; and it will be a matter of theatrical curiosity to contrast them with those produced by his son on the present occasion. The difference, when all things are considered, will be found so trifling as to be scarcely worth notice. Between the 8th of January, and the 3d of March, 1838, Mr. Charles Kean played forty-three nights; twenty-one of them in *Hamlet*, seventeen in *Richard the Third*, and five in *Sir Giles Overreach*. The following is a genuine recapitulation of the receipts, with the nightly average of them as well:—

	£.	s.	d.
21 Nights of <i>Hamlet</i> produced	6,236	0	0
Nightly average	296	19	0
17 Nights of <i>Richard the Third</i> produced .	5,516	14	0
Nightly average	324	10	0
5 Nights of <i>Sir Giles</i> produced	1,536	8	0
Nightly average	307	5	0
43 Nights in all produced	13,289	2	0
Nightly average	309	10	0

* These were also the three characters in which John Kemble made his first appearances at Drury Lane, in 1783, and he acted them in the same order.

† Vol. iii. pp. 26-8.

"The nightly average Mr. Charles Kean's father played to in 1814 was 484*l.* 9*s.*; exhibiting an apparent nightly excess over that his son played to, of 174*l.* 19*s.* But it must not be forgotten that the prices of admission in 1814 were 7*s.* to the boxes, 3*s.* 6*d.* to the pit, 2*s.* to the one gallery, and 1*s.* to the other, and the half-price was in proportion; whereas, in 1838, the prices were 5*s.* to the boxes, 3*s.* to the pit, and 2*s.* and 1*s.* to the galleries, with a corresponding reduction in the half-price. That the reader may judge of the difference such a deduction makes, a statement shall be submitted to him. The largest receipt Mr. Charles Kean played to was 464*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.*; on which occasion 770 people paid to the boxes—which number, at 5*s.* each, makes the sum of 192*l.* 10*s.*; but had the price been 7*s.* the amount would have been 269*l.* 10*s.*, a difference of itself of 77*l.* Then, 768 persons paid to the pit—which number, at 3*s.* each, makes a sum of 115*l.* 4*s.*, whereas, at 3*s.* 6*d.*, the amount would be 134*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.* In these two items alone arises a difference of 96*l.* 4*s.*, which added to 3*l.* 18*s.* difference in the half-price to boxes and pit, make a total of 100*l.* 2*s.* In addition to this, it must be taken into consideration that the father played only three nights per week, while the son played four nights during the greater part of this engagement; and that consequently by a more frequent repetition the attraction becomes somewhat lessened. Between the 8th of January and the 3d of March, 1838, the son played forty-three nights, as just stated; whereas in a corresponding period of 1814, following his *debüt*, the father played, between the 26th of January and the 21st of March, only twenty-two nights. The father in that period played *Richard the Third* ten times, *Shylock* ten times, and *Hamlet* twice; whereas the son played *Richard* seventeen times, *Hamlet* twenty-one times, and *Sir Giles*

Overreach five times. Thus, in the same period of two months, though each of them only played three characters, yet, barring one night, the son played twice as often as the father. Weighing, therefore, all these points together, it will be found, that in the outburst of their London career, there was but a slight difference in the attraction of either: a coincidence without any parallel in the annals of the stage."

It has often been argued that the enormous salaries paid to individual performers in recent times, have had a very damaging effect on the interests of the drama. This may be quite true in the abstract, and sound, as a general principle; but instances such as that of which we are now treating, furnish unanswerable exceptions. The matter reduces itself to a commercial speculation, and viewed in that light, no one will deny that the intrinsic worth of any commodity is the purchaseable value at which it is quoted in the market.

We believe Charles Kean was the first actor of *Hamlet*, of any note, who gave up the old traditionary custom of having a stocking "down-gyved to the ankle," during that part of the play when he assumes a disordered intellect—a piece of literal rendering sufficiently vulgar, and certainly "more honoured in the breach than the observance." Garrick, though a professed reformer, indulged freely in these stage trickeries. It is recorded that in the closet scene with the *Queen*, he had a mechanical contrivance by which his chair fell, as if of itself, when he started upon the sudden entrance of the *Ghost*. Henderson, his immediate successor in the part, rejected this practice, and his doing so was called, by the critics of the day, a daring innovation. Garrick, with all his brilliant genius, was a very methodical actor; when he had once settled in what is technically called "business" of a part, he never altered it."

In the play-scene, when he satisfies himself that he has detected the guilt of the *King*, he wound up his burst of exultation at the close by three flourishes of his pocket-handkerchief over his head, as he paced the stage backwards and forwards. It was once remarked, as an extraordinary deviation, that he added a fourth flourish.

The popularity of Charles Kean's *Hamlet* was by no means on the decline at the twenty-first repetition, but the public were naturally anxious to see the new performer in another Shakespearean character, of a different cast; and accordingly, in compliance with incessant applications at the box-office, *Richard the Third* was brought forward on the 5th of February. The receipts of that evening amounted to 409*l*. Her Majesty was present throughout the entire performance, and commanded the manager to express to Mr. Kean her extreme approbation of his performance. The Queen was so pleased that she repeated her visit within a week or two after. The *Times* spoke thus on the 6th of February:—

“Shakespeare's historical play of ‘Richard the Third,’ as altered by Colley Cibber, was last night represented before a most crowded audience. Many plays of our great dramatist have, from time to time, been altered by various hands; but Cibber's alteration of this piece is undoubtedly the best effort of the kind that has yet been made. He has lopped off superfluities, which, however beautiful in the closet, were not calculated to produce a powerful effect on the stage; and he has condensed within a reasonable compass, more of interest, of striking situation, and of stirring action, than is to be found in almost any other drama. Mr. Charles Kean sustained the character of the crook-backed tyrant. It is not often that the son inherits any great portion of the genius of the father. In this

instance, however, the mantle of the father has fallen gracefully on the son. When we witnessed his *Hamlet*, we saw that he had mind ; that he could perform, and finely, that which was quiet, contemplative, melancholy ; but we certainly did feel a doubt whether his physical powers would enable him successfully to enact characters where great bodily as well as great mental exertion, was required. His performance of last night has dissipated the doubt. His vigour seemed to grow with the exigency of the scene. The tender, lowly, and in some parts somewhat sarcastic wooing of *Lady Anne*, was finely contrasted with the bold audacity of the successful tyrant in the fourth and fifth acts of the play. These are general remarks : we now wish to devote a few lines to particulars. *Richard's* opening soliloquy was given with great point and effect ; the latter part more especially, where the mis-shapen monster expresses his belief that dogs bark at him as he halts by them. In his delivery of this sentence there was much concentration of bitterness. It told you at once of something like hatred to himself, but certainly of hatred towards the rest of mankind. The courtship scene with *Lady Anne* was, on the whole, good ; but there was, in the sly sarcasm with which it was sprinkled, too much straining after epigrammatic effect. The audience enjoyed it ; but had *Richard*, in his wooing, so much exposed his natural aptitude to ‘snarl and bite, and play the dog,’ he would have never won the widow of his murdered victim.

“With the soliloquy in the fourth act, when the murder of the young princes is on foot, we were greatly pleased. *Richard*, for a moment, is assailed by remorseful pangs, but they are quickly expelled by the more powerful feelings of an exorbitant ambition. The momentary penitence and the subsequent hardihood of the

usurper were forcibly depicted by Mr. Kean. He met with commensurate vigour the busy, bustling scene at the end of the fourth act, where *Richard* is assailed alternately by good and bad intelligence; when he falters at the idea of *Lord Stanley's* defection, and rejoices in the overthrow of *Buckingham* and his rash levied crew. The tent-scene in the last act was ably performed. Instead of sliding on his knees when, terrified by the ghosts of his murdered victims, *Richard* rushes from his couch, Mr. Kean staggered and fell, cowering and conscience-stricken, to the earth. This departure from the old routine was as strikingly effective as it was natural.

"Speaking of the entire performance, we should say that Mr. Kean has studied the character thoroughly; that he understands it, and plays it in a manner worthy of his name. We again, however, object to the length of many of his pauses. They give you, at times, an idea that he has forgotten his part, and is pondering to refresh his memory. We equally object to the manner in which he occasionally weighs out and measures his syllables, when they ought to come trippingly from the tongue. These, nevertheless, are matters of little moment, and with a wish may be corrected. Mr. Kean's reception was of the most flattering kind. At the end of the play, he was loudly called for. He appeared, after considerable delay, occasioned, we believe, by exhaustion, and having made his obeisance to the audience, retired."

The friends and admirers of Charles Kean, having determined to mark their opinion of his professional ability by a specific compliment, a public dinner was given to him, on the 30th of March, in the saloon of Drury Lane Theatre, on which occasion he was also presented with a magnificent silver vase, value 200*l*.

The workmanship of this gratifying testimonial was exquisitely designed and finished: the lid being surmounted by a model in miniature of Roubilliac's celebrated statue of Shakespeare, left by Garrick to the British Museum at the death of his wife, a cast from which stands in the entrance rotunda of Drury Lane Theatre. On the front the following inscription was engraved:—

PRESENTED
TO
CHARLES KEAN, Esq.
BY THE ADMIRERS OF HIS DISTINGUISHED TALENT
AT
A PUBLIC DINNER
GIVEN TO HIM IN THE SALOON AT THE
THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.
MARCH 30TH, 1838;
THE RIGHT HON. LORD MORPETH, M.P.
IN THE CHAIR.

At this dinner, Lord Morpeth, now Earl of Carlisle, had, in the kindest and readiest manner, undertaken to preside: but two days before the appointed evening, political duties interfered, and compelled him to write thus to Mr. Bunn, who superintended the arrangements:—

" Wednesday Evening,
" March 28, 1838.

" SIR.—

" It is with extreme regret and disappointment that I find myself compelled to announce to you, that, in consequence of a new arrangement of the business of the House of Commons, and the certainty of the debate upon Negro Emancipation, from which I cannot absent myself, extending over Friday, it will be wholly impossible for me to attend the dinner to be given on that day to Mr. Charles Kean.

"I ought, perhaps, to have guarded myself more strictly against such a contingency, when I agreed to discharge the honourable office of chairman on this auspicious occasion. I was misled by the anticipation of other business in the House, and by my anxiety to bear a part in the tribute which I thought so well deserved.

"I am conscious, however, that almost all there is of privation in this matter belongs to myself. I beg to inclose my contribution to the vase, which it is intended to present to Mr. Kean, as a humble mark of my admiration for his talents, and of my regret that I am debarred from this occasion of giving it oral expression.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"MORPETH.

"To A. Bunn, Esq."

This unexpected disappointment threatened to derange the whole plan, but the difficulty was surmounted by an application to the Marquis of Clanricarde, who was to have officiated as vice-president, but now promptly consented to supply the place of his noble colleague. The dinner took place as appointed, and all went off in the most satisfactory manner. Above one hundred and fifty persons were present, including many names eminent by their rank, talent, and literary reputation. The speeches, as may be supposed, were eloquent and characteristic. That of Charles Kean, in particular, was remarkable for the modest and unassuming tone in which he spoke of himself and his pretensions.

The chairman, in his address to the guest of the evening, after expressing his regret at the unavoidable absence of their mutual friend Lord Morpeth, who, he said, would have performed the duty which had

in consequence unexpectedly devolved upon him with much superior grace and ability, went on to say:—“ But I know your kindness will overlook any deficiency, and that you will not measure the depth of my feeling, and that of the gentlemen I represent, by the inadequate language I can command, or by the value of the offering which is before you. At the same time, I trust you will receive this cup with satisfaction; for sure I am, there is no tribute which could be offered to you, either from your friends or the public, that you may not attribute to your own merits and your own abilities. Perhaps one source of the high position to which you have attained, is the fact of your having entered upon your professional career with no circumstance or advantage that I can recollect or call to mind. The name you bore, the similarity in form, in feature, and in voice, which nature had impressed you with, and which proved to every beholder that the genius of the father was transmitted to the son, counteracted the indulgence usually manifested to a youthful beginner; but you have overcome all obstacles. You knew the toil, the study, and the perseverance that it would require to attain to eminence in your profession. By study I mean that diligent examination of the variety of delicate and almost imperceptible shades and tints of character, which our mighty bard has infused into all his heroes, so as not only to create corresponding ideas in your own mind, but to be able to convey those ideas to an audience, and make them feel and recognise the character which Shakespeare drew. In this you have succeeded, and, in doing so, you have raised the character of the stage, while you have earned the admiration of your friends and the public. It is a circumstance not only singular, but I believe unprecedented, that a performer should have appeared forty-three nights in one season, and

played only three parts, and those old stock parts, so well known to the public that they could receive no new impression from them, and no gratification, except in the way in which they were performed."

The noble chairman then referred to the estimation in which actors had been held in ancient Greece and Rome, and to the low condition of the stage in this country until its character was vindicated by Garrick, and sustained by the Kemble family; names with which that of Kean was well calculated to stand associated. Having then enumerated amongst Mr. C. Kean's principal claims upon the respect and admiration of his supporters, his unblemished integrity, high honour, and refined taste in private life, he concluded by expressing a hope that the object of his eulogy would long continue the ornament of the stage, the delight of his friends, and, above all, the pride of that surviving parent who lived to bless him as the joy, the stay, and the comfort of her declining years.*

This complimentary address and the accompanying gift were thus acknowledged:—

"MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,—

"The situation in which your kindness has at this moment placed me, I feel to be the most arduous and difficult I have ever yet encountered. It would be unbecoming affectation were I to pretend that I was not in some measure aware of the high and unmerited compliment you intended to confer on me. I had thought and hoped, that when the proper time arrived I should have been able to express myself in terms suited to the occasion. The opinions and wishes of the distinguished company by which I am surrounded, have been conveyed to me by the noble chairman in a manner so

* See "The Stage, Before and Behind the Curtain," vol. iii. pp. 23-4.

unexpectedly kind, so flattering, and so overwhelming, that even a practised orator might falter in his reply; but lest I should appear cold and ungrateful, while my breast is throbbing with contrary emotions, let me entreat you to receive the language of the heart, in place of the set phrases of studied eloquence; and to believe in the sincerity of those feelings which, by their own intensity, have deprived me of adequate expression.

"The distinguished honour I am now receiving at your hands, is one which artists of the highest name and pretensions have hailed with delight, when in the decline of life, and at the close of a long and brilliant career, as the reward of their honourable exertions. How, then, must I appreciate your kindness, young in years, standing almost on the very threshold of my professional life, my pretensions untried by the purifying test of time, the station I am ultimately to fill unascertained; upheld, as I now am, by the partial judgment of enthusiastic friends, and above all, by a name which has been my most powerful introduction to the notice and favour of the public.

"I cannot and do not wish to blind myself to my true position; but I feel that an affectionate remembrance of the father has, in your eyes, invested the son with attributes to which he has no personal claim, and has placed him in a situation, brilliant indeed and dazzling, but full of difficulty and danger. I shrink from the consciousness of my own inability to realize the expectations of those friends who have so kindly and incalculably committed themselves in my favour; yet to the latest hour of my existence, the remembrance of this the proudest day which that existence has yet witnessed will serve as a stimulus to unremitting exertion, and make me feel as if I had given a pledge which it is my incumbent duty to redeem.

“My lords and gentlemen, the place where we are now assembled is associated in my mind with feelings of hereditary interest. Within these walls the name of Kean first became known to the London public, and the success of my father created an epoch in the history of the British drama, which will not soon be forgotten. After an interval of twenty-four years, on the same boards, and by the same public, my humble efforts have been received with a degree of favour and indulgence far indeed beyond my merits and expectations, and which has engraved on my heart one paramount impression of lasting gratitude. My lords and gentlemen, I will occupy your attention no longer. What I have said is totally unworthy of the occasion, and conveys but faintly what I feel. The conduct of my future life can alone convince you how I estimate the honour I have received.”

A few days after the dinner, Charles Kean took his departure for the northern capital, where he was received with the old enthusiasm, and a succession of the same crowded houses. He returned to London on the 9th of May, when his performances at Drury Lane were resumed, but with something of diminished attraction. The season was advancing, and the interruption (as all persons experienced in theatrical matters anticipated), had given a check to the flowing tide. In Mr. Bunn's published diary, we find the subjoined note:—

“Charles Kean has been absent but five weeks; yet in that time he has allowed those who *have* seen him to forget him in the folly and fashion of a London season, after Easter;—and those who have *not*, want to know if he is a fine actor, and keep back until *they're told*. There comes a new world into Babylon when this period of the year arrives. At the same time nothing

can be more injudicious than to break the thread, and, too often, the chain of anything, particularly if connected with public life. I doubt me if he will rouse up the Cockneys to any great extent until next Christmas hath waned, and then much will depend upon whose hands he gets into. He will, however, at all times do more than any of the dogs who venture to snarl at him."

On the 16th of May, Charles Kean essayed the difficult character of *Othello*, a touchstone, if possible, more trying than any he had yet handled. The performance was most satisfactorily welcomed by a crowded house. The notice in the *Morning Post* ran thus:—

"DRURY LANE THEATRE.—Mr. Charles Kean appeared here last evening for the first time, as *Othello*. Under any circumstances, the character is an arduous one, but was rendered more so on the present occasion, from its having been considered the *chef-d'œuvre* of his lamented father. Mr. C. Kean, however, sustained the burthen most manfully, and achieved so complete a victory over all obstacles (amongst which reminiscences of by-gone days were not the least embarrassing), as to warrant us in pronouncing *Othello* as entitled to a foremost rank in his range of parts. On his first appearance he evinced by his manner a consciousness of the difficulties he was about to encounter, which created some apprehension that physically he might be unequal to the task; but as the play progressed, and level speaking gave place to bursts of feeling, the genius of the actor shone forth in its brightest colours, and elicited from a crowded audience such manifestations of applause, as might fairly lead to an anticipation of the revival of the most flourishing days of the drama. When everything was so deserving of praise, to particularise may seem invi

dious; but we should imperfectly fulfil our duty were we not to select a few passages in the delivery of which Mr. Kean achieved his greatest triumphs. In the first scene of the third act, after *Iago* has first awakened his jealousy, the soliloquy expressive of his resolve as to what course to pursue in the event of *Desdemona* proving false to him, was given with an alternate power and pathos to find a parallel to which we must revert to the days of his father. The passage commencing—

‘ If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
I’d whistle her off, and let down the wind,
To prey at fortune,’

was delivered with an effect really appalling; and the transition from the frenzied manner which accompanied the utterance of the above lines, to the thrilling tone of deep despondency with which he uttered—

‘ Haply, for I am black,’ &c.,

drew tears in abundance from the eyes of the larger portion of his fair auditory. The concluding scene demands a word, were it only for the death, which was true to nature, inasmuch as in such a predicament, a man does not usually study attitudes; and, albeit, the falling of Mr. Kean may have been premeditated, it was hardly planned with a due regard to life and limb. For the safety of the last we certainly felt no small degree of apprehension. The play was announced for repetition on Friday, amidst vehement applause.”

On the 4th of June following, the engagement terminated, when Charles Kean appeared for his own benefit, as *Sir Edward Mortimer*. This second series of performances was less productive than the first; for which some reasons have already been assigned. A change, too, had suddenly “come o’er the spirit” of the press; more than

one of the most influential journals assumed an altered tone, and condemned the identical "points" which they had a short time before so warmly praised. It was impossible that a few weeks of absence could have produced any variation in the actor's style, or the measure of his pretensions. A *hostile clique* was forming; but how, wherefore, or by whom suggested, fostered, and matured, it would be fruitless now to inquire. These hidden enemies, whoever they might be, had the merit of keeping counsel with the secrecy of a freemason's lodge, and evinced a pertinacity of purpose which perpetual defeat during a long series of years seems only to have had the effect of sharpening into augmented virulence. The subjoined letter received at a period somewhat later than that of which we are now treating, bears upon the progress of the conspiracy, or coalition, or combination, or whatever it may be called, and was written by Mr. Michael Nugent, for many years the theatrical reporter of the *Times*, and a critic of acknowledged repute.

" New Street, Covent Garden,

" MY DEAR SIR,—

" June 9, 1839.

" I regret sincerely that severe illness, which has confined me to my bed for nearly the whole of the by-gone week, prevented me from seeing you, when you were good enough to honour me with a call.

" It gave me a true and honest satisfaction to perceive by the statements in the country journals, that your career through the long range of the provinces was a continued triumph. That it should be so everywhere requires, in my mind (and I have expressed the sentiment and defended it too, in public and in private, before those to whom it was little palatable), nothing more than a fair, candid, and impartial spirit.

" That during your last London engagement such :

spirit was not entertained towards you, by certain partisans, I can testify. But you may, and ought to laugh at their miserable malice. What have you to fear from the petty malevolence of *judges* (?) who lauded to the skies and worshipped as stars such *ignes fatui* as ———? Rejoice in their censure.

“ Were I engaged in the theatrical arena just now, your talents, for talents’ sake, should receive my warmest support. As it is, I am obliged, at this critical period of political strife, to attend to the sayings and doings of the great actors at St. Stephen’s. I can only, therefore, offer you my sincere good wishes, whether you pursue fame and fortune in this country, or in the great Western Republic.

“ Suffer me to subscribe myself

“ Your admirer and friend,

“ MICHAEL NUGENT.

“ To C. Kean, Esq.”

If professional jealousy, in any shape, or through any influence, had anything to do with this growing hostility, it never was exercised upon less justifiable grounds. Charles Kean had ever proved himself a kind and generous friend to his less prosperous brethren. Many instances have fallen within the knowledge of the writer, from which two or three are selected, to establish by evidence what might otherwise be treated as mere assertion.

*A Letter from MR. PEAKE on behalf of the English
Opera House Company.*

“ English Opera House,

“ Sept. 22d, 1838.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ We, the undersigned, crave your attention for a few moments, in the hope that you may be induced to

favour us with an act of kindness which would certainly relieve us from a position of great embarrassment. We ask this boon, knowing your attachment to your profession, and your liberality to the less fortunate brethren thereof.

"The undersigned, apprehending that the English Opera House could not, for want of a speculator, open for the summer season, and seeing that a large number of their brothers and sisters must literally starve, by being out of employ, subscribed a little fund and commenced a season. We have produced no less than ten new dramas, successful as to their representation; but such has been the state of public apathy as regards the theatres, that every effort of ours has proved a failure. We have paid all the humble classes employed, but at the expense of our own salaries; and we have also a heavy arrear of rent to meet, with exhausted means.

"In great anxiety of mind we ask of your kindness to come and act *one night* for us. The cause to be assigned openly to the public, and your liberality to be as openly recorded.

"Pray, dear Sir, take our wishes and hopes into your favourable consideration, and confer a lasting obligation on

"Your obedient servants, &c.

"To Charles Kean, Esq."

Here follow the signatures, sixteen in number.

MR. KEAN'S *answer to MR. PEAKE, from Leeds.*

"Scarborough Hotel, Leeds,

"Sept. 24th, 1838.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I received last night the letter signed by the members of the English Opera House, and was deeply pained to hear that the Company are in such embar-

pressed circumstances. I am equally grieved that it is totally out of my power to comply with their request of performing a night for their benefit, and refer you to the list of my engagements left with Mr. Hughes, lest occasion should render my direction necessary, to show that I have not a single day at my command from the present time until Christmas. Presuming, however, that a benefit will be announced for the purpose of removing the present difficulties, I trust that in place of my professional services, you will accept the enclosed cheque for 100*l.* to be placed at the disposal of the Company. With every wish for their better success,

“I remain, my dear Sir,

“Very truly yours,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

MR. PEAKE to CHARLES KEAN, *in reply* :—

“English Opera House, London,

“Feb. 27th, 1838.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter, and a bank note for 100*l.*

“Accept the grateful thanks of all who addressed you for this mark of liberality, which will prove a great relief under the circumstances. I have not adequate words to express my astonishment at this act of princely generosity. The warm feelings of your heart will in some measure repay you ; but may constant and deserved prosperity attend you. We, one and all, fervently say, God bless you!

“I am, my dear Sir,

“Your faithful and obliged servant,

“R. B. PEAKE.

“To Charles Kean, Esq.,

“Scarborough Hotel, Leeds.”

It has seldom fallen to the lot of a biographer to transcribe a more satisfactory correspondence than the foregoing.

*From MR. E. W. ELTON.**

“DEAR SIR,—

“I have great pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of your very liberal donation (of 50*l.*) to the General Theatrical Fund, and of forwarding the grateful thanks of the directors for so generous an assistance of the object they have in view. At the same time allow me to inform you that if no personal application has been made to you on the subject, the omission has not been through any slight, or forgetfulness of the rank you hold in the profession, but simply because no such application has been made to any one. Our donors have all been, like yourself, volunteers in the cause, and I need not say how happy I am at seeing your name added to the corps. I inclose you a formal receipt for your donation, and have great pleasure in subscribing myself,

“Dear Sir, yours very truly,

“EDWARD WILLIAM ELTON.

“To Charles Kean, Esq.”

* A tragic actor, of good, second-rate reputation, who was unfortunately lost in the *Pegasus* on the 19th of July, 1843, which ill-fated vessel struck on the *Gold Rock*, during a voyage from Leith to London. Of fifty-five persons on board, all but six perished. Poor Elton had repeatedly expressed the greatest possible horror and commiseration of the similarly sudden fate of Tyrone Power, in March, 1841. A sum of 2,700*l.* was realised for his family by subscriptions and benefit performances. Whatever may be the professional jealousies of actors, how often are we called upon to note that when a fraternal appeal is made to them, they are ever ready to respond with generous warmth.

*From the COMMITTEE OF THE BATH COMPANY.**
To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

“ Theatre Royal, Bath,
“ 1st June, 1842.

“ SIR,—

“ We, the Committee of Management of the Bath Company, beg to acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter, with its very handsome and liberal donation (20*l.*). In applying to you for your valuable name and assistance, we did so in the conviction that both would be of the highest importance to our interests; and however we must regret your inability personally to aid us, accept our very sincere and grateful thanks.

“ We remain, sir,

“ Yours most gratefully,

“ J. WOULDs,

“ *Chairman of the Committee, &c.*

“ Charles Kean, Esq.”

Other signatures follow to the amount of eight.

* The Bath company had been left in great distress by their runaway manager.

CHAPTER XVII.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SIR EDWARD BULWER RELATIVE TO A NEW PLAY—ENGAGEMENT AT THE HAYMARKET—HAMLET—SIR GILES OVERREACH—SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA—BURNING OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE AT NEW YORK—ATTACK OF BRONCHITIS, AND PERFORMANCES SUSPENDED IN CONSEQUENCE—VISIT TO THE HAVANNAH—LETTER FROM THENCE—RETURN TO ENGLAND IN JUNE, 1840—SECOND ENGAGEMENT AT THE HAYMARKET—HAMLET—RICHARD THE THIRD—SHYLOCK—SIR GILES OVERREACH—MACBETH—ARTICLE HEADED “CHARLES KEAN AND HIS LONDON CRITICS”—ENGAGEMENT AT THE HAYMARKET FOR THREE SUCCESSIVE SEASONS.

CHARLES KEAN had always been anxious for an original character, which greatly assists the actor's progress, by placing him on his own ground, freed from the disadvantage of comparison. Now that fortune had given him the means, he was ready to pay any sum within reason for a new play. Money he regarded as secondary to fame, and valuable as a medium through which the nobler acquisition might be won. With this impression, he applied to Sir Edward Bulwer, in the hope of being aided by his powerful genius. We insert the letter and reply :—

“ To SIR E. LYTTON BULWER, BART.

“ Liverpool, Nov. 13th, 1838.

“ SIR,—

“ The flattering success which has attended my attempts in the provinces to do justice to the character of *Claude Melnotte*,* and the debt of gratitude I owe you

* The hero of Sir E. L. Bulwer's highly-popular play of the “Lady of Lyons”—one of the most successful of modern dramas. The original representative in London was Mr. Macready, by whom the play was produced at Covent Garden in 1838, and who personated *Claude Melnotte* with great ability.

for the means thus afforded me of advancing my professional career, must be my apology for addressing you; if a better excuse did not exist in your character as an author, and the deserved influence you possess over our dramatic literature. I am most anxious to appear in London in a new part; and I feel that your assistance would be invaluable in the promotion of this purpose, and of my desire to carry out all the objects of the legitimate drama in a spirit of honourable competition. If it should suit your views to give me the benefit of your great talents on this occasion, I shall be sincerely grateful; and though pecuniary considerations can be no object with you, I think it right to add, as a matter of business, that I place myself and a *carte blanche* at your disposal. I trust there is no indelicacy in saying this, when I reflect how much I should still remain your debtor, by the honour I might hope to derive from the representation of any character from the pen of Sir Lytton Bulwer.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"CHARLES KEAN."

"To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

"8, Charles-street, Berkeley-square,

"Nov. 14, 1838.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"Believe me sincerely obliged and flattered by your letter, and the request it contains. The manner in which you express your wish cannot but make me anxious, sooner or later, to comply with it. I fear, however, that, at present, heavy engagements, and other circumstances too tedious to enter upon, will not allow me an honour, otherwise sincerely to be desired, and

which you will permit me to consider not sacrificed, but deferred. For the rest, allow me to assure you that the pecuniary considerations to which you so delicately allude, are not likely to form an obstacle against any future arrangement; and that—

“I am, dear Sir,

“Very truly, your obliged

“E. LYTTON BULWER.”

On Thursday, the 3d of June, 1839, Charles Kean returned to London after a tour round the kingdom, in which praise and profit accompanied him as inseparable travelling companions. His performances were now transferred to the Haymarket, under the management of Mr. Webster, from whom he received, as previously at Drury Lane, 50*l.* per night, and a benefit. The engagement was for twelve nights, but the success extended it to twenty-two, *Hamlet* being acted on ten out of the number, and proving, as before, the most popular representation. The other characters were, *Richard the Third*, repeated five times; *Sir Giles Overreach*, three times; and *Othello* and *Sir Edward Mortimer*, each twice. His reception was everything that he could desire, although he had now to contend occasionally with a captious criticism and a dissentient opinion. The unfriendly *clique* was gaining strength: still an overwhelming majority were with him; enough to satisfy the most ambitious candidate for that most uncertain of all acquisitions—although so universally courted—public favour. The press began to be more divided and qualified in their notices than during the preceding year. In the *Times* and *Morning Post* there was no alteration. The former said: “When Mr. Charles Kean commenced his career at Drury Lane Theatre, with the character of *Hamlet*, it may be remembered that our opinion of him

was most favourable. On the occasion of his first appearance last night at the Haymarket, in the same character, it will be sufficient to remind our readers of the opinion, and to state that that opinion is entirely unaltered, as is decidedly the case. The house was crowded, and at Kean's first appearance the applause was so immoderate, and lasted so long, as to impede for some minutes the progress of the piece. At the fall of the curtain he was loudly called for, and made his bow before a mass of waving hats and handkerchiefs."

The *Morning Post* spoke thus, after noticing his enthusiastic reception:—"In regard to Mr. Kean's performance of *Hamlet*, there will be always conflicting opinions. Our own is, that it is of a very high order. Unequal, it is true, but at times full of fire, at others of feeling; never violating proprieties, and often producing fine effects. Let us, however, add, that *Hamlet* is to our mind the most difficult part within our knowledge of all the conceptions of Shakespeare; that Mr. Kean's own father misread it, and gave us a startling performance instead of a true one; that John Kemble did not master all its subtle delicacies; and that Charles Young alone, of all whom we have seen play it, brought it nearest to anything like an even and equable perfection. The acting of Charles Kean last night was well sustained throughout. The points he intended to make came out forcibly. He was much applauded in his address to *Guildestern*, previous to the entrance of the players; and the scene with the players itself he acted carefully, crowning their departure with the truly splendid and powerful declamatory soliloquy with which Shakespeare at this juncture fills the mind and soul of *Hamlet*. His reproachful comparison between the energy and feeling of the player without a cause, and

what his own should be, who had so much and such agonizing incitement, was kindling, vehement, and passionate, and told eloquently with the audience. But Mr. Kean's greatest, and most effective episode of acting all through the tragedy was in the scene in which the play is represented before the *King* and *Queen*, and *Hamlet* is reclining on the ground at the feet of *Ophelia*. All the minor points which occur in the strongly-applied incidents of this scene were admirably brought out; and at the conclusion, when the *King* hastily departs, calling in hurried terror and anger for '*some light*,' he rushed up with a glorious burst of half-frantic triumph, to the utterance of the lines—

‘Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungallèd play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep;
So runs the world away!’

This was the most loudly-applauded effort during the whole performance. The tragedy was, after Kean had been called for, and vociferously cheered, announced for repetition on Wednesday and Friday, amidst general applause.”

The same paper thus warmly eulogizes a subsequent performance of *Sir Giles Overreach*—“Notwithstanding the qualified praise of some critics, and the stern opposition of others, the brilliant success which has attended Mr. Charles Kean's late engagement at this theatre (Haymarket), proves that the public voice has confirmed his right to wear the mantle of his father. Although it must be confessed that the drapery continues to display something like its former folds, they fall easily and naturally into their position, and have none of the stiffness of artificial arrangement. That which would be imitation in another, is, in the younger Kean, obedience

to the law of nature. Even when the son strives successfully to avoid his father's style of speaking a remarkable passage, the similarity of their tones compels the auditor to blend his recollection of past enthusiasm with his present enjoyment. But if his celebrated precursor had never appeared before a London audience, Mr. Charles Kean's embodiment of *Sir Giles Overreach* last night would have caused him to be hailed as a star of no ordinary brilliancy in the dramatic firmament. To enter into an analysis of a performance which has very lately been much dilated upon, would indeed be a work of supererogation. Mr. Kean's attributes for the personification of this painful conception of the poet, are extraordinary in so young a man. Last night his spirit and energy were unfailing; no point 'came tardily off.' Perhaps a fastidious observer might say that the actor's efforts to produce effect are sometimes too obvious; but this is a fault which experience will not fail to remedy completely. Time will, doubtless, give to the filling up of Mr. Kean's bold outlines that mellowness which age gives to the productions of masters in a rival art. After the hero of the night had been called forward, to be complimented with the now customary cheerings, waving of hats and handkerchiefs, bouquets, &c., an announcement was made that his engagement is renewed for six nights, in obedience to the wishes of the patrons of the theatre. As the demands for places have lately increased beyond the possibility of accommodating the applicants, the enterprising lessee will, no doubt, profit by the extension of this exceedingly popular young actor's engagement."

In a report on the last night, the *Morning Post* again poke, as follows:—"Mr. Charles Kean took his 'farewell benefit' last night before one of the most crowded

and brilliant audiences we ever saw in this or any other theatre. The play selected for the occasion was *Hamlet*, the tenth time of its performance during an engagement originally proposed to be but for twelve nights, but which has been extended to nearly double that number, in consequence of Mr. Kean's extraordinary attraction. It would be superfluous to make any remarks on a performance so well known and highly appreciated. It is sufficient to say, that Mr. Kean exhibited even more than his usual care and energy, and was rewarded by a corresponding enthusiasm on the part of his auditors. On being summoned before the curtain at the conclusion of the tragedy, by often-repeated calls from every part of the house, Mr. Kean was greeted with the most flattering demonstrations of favour—'bravo!' waving of hats, handkerchiefs, showers of bouquets, wreaths, &c. As soon as silence could be obtained, he, evidently in a state of considerable emotion, addressed the house in the following words:—

'LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.—The simple but sincere expression of my thanks is all the poor return I can make you for your continual kindness. The pride and happiness I feel at this moment are darkened by the thought that I am on the eve of departure. I quit you for a country endeared to me by many recollections—a country where in my early professional struggles I found a home to receive and friends to cheer me. If since that period my position be changed, how can I acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe the British public? Encouraged by this success, I venture to announce that on my early return from the United States I am engaged again at this theatre, till when, ladies and gentlemen I most respectfully and gratefully bid you farewell.' "

Mr. Kean's announcement of his return to the Hay

market was received with an unanimous burst of approbation; and he left the stage cheered by the reiterated plaudits of the audience.

During the following September he appeared at the National Theatre in Church Street, New York, then under the management of Mr. J. Wallack. The house was crowded and enthusiastic, but after this auspicious commencement clouds gathered rapidly, and a series of fatalities seemed to attend Charles Kean's second visit to the United States. When he began to act he was suffering from an affection of the throat; exertion made his voice give way, and on the fourth night he entirely broke down. The theatre was soon after destroyed by fire. Such burnings are often suspicious, and on this occasion rumours of foul play were loudly disseminated. Wallack himself made no secret of his impression that a rival manager had some share in his misfortune. That rival was seen conspicuously posted on the roof of the Astor House Hotel, watching the progress of the destroying element, and no one heard him utter expressions of sympathy or regret. We naturally think of Nero, who played the lyre on the terrace of his own palace, as an accompaniment to the conflagration of his own imperial city, fired by his own hand or by the hands of his emissaries. At Boston, in December, 1839, Charles Kean narrowly escaped a frightful catastrophe. While acting *Rolla*, in "Pizarro," and standing between the wings, preparatory to his entrance for the dying scene, the child was brought to him; he stepped a pace forward to receive it; the leader of the supernumeraries, named Stimpson, who was also waiting to go on as one of the Peruvian soldiers, moved into the spot he had left vacant: at that moment a heavy counter-weight fell from the machinery above, broke through a slight scaffolding, and crushed the unfortunate underling, who was killed

on the spot, his blood profusely sprinkling the dress of *Rolla* as he rushed on from the wing to finish the tragedy. This shocking disaster was immediately communicated to the crowded audience, who at once departed from the theatre. A gloom was thus unavoidably thrown over the remainder of the engagement. A renewed attack of bronchitis soon after this compelled Charles Kean to suspend acting until rest should remove the complaint. Loss of time to a man who lives by his profession is loss of money. Hoping to benefit by change of air and variety of climate in a milder temperature, he visited the Havannah. From thence, the subjoined letter, written to the author of these pages, detailed his proceedings up to that date :—

“ Matanzas, Island of Cuba,
“ March 20th, 1840.

“ MY DEAR C——,

“ I have been long intending to write to you a full account of my transatlantic visit, but have procrastinated so long from one cause and another, especially as I wished to be able to give you a better account of myself, that I dare say you will be surprised to hear from me at all, after so long a silence, and particularly from the West Indies; unless the newspapers have informed you that ill health obliged me to seek the benefit of this climate, which already has so much improved me, that people smile to hear that I came to Havannah on the sick list. Away from the cares and troubles of my American campaign, where I have been subjected to a succession of annoyances, accidents, and unsatisfactory transactions with managers and others, here I am occupied in visiting an island so novel and interesting to an English eye, and have for the first time since I left home enjoyed those sensations which accompany an unshackled mind and healthful body.

"After I had secured a passage with other English travellers, and agreeable companions, from Charleston, in a very small American brigantine, a steamboat arrived with the ex-governor of Cuba, and having landed his Excellency, was as glad to receive us back as passengers, as we were to forego our previous quarters, and avail ourselves of a chance that gave us so good an opportunity of visiting the Havannah. On one of the most lovely mornings since the creation, we passed under the frowning battlements of the Moro castle, and the lighthouse at the entrance to the harbour, and soon set foot in the capital of the Western Indies. I cannot describe the delicious temperament of the morn and evening; although it is considered rather dangerous to walk much abroad under the scorching influence of the meridian sun.

"Imagine me in the costume of a planter, white jacket and trousers, and straw hat about four feet in the circumference of the brim. In the evenings, however, you must change to something more European, to attend a capital opera. On the other night this large and handsome building was crowded to the roof on the occasion of De Begnis's benefit. A most singular, and, as I think, degrading custom, although a very lucrative one, exists here, of the performer, whose night it is, sitting at the floor, dressed for the character he is to represent, with two silver dishes before him to receive the doubloons and dollars the visitors may think proper to bestow. Sometimes, I am told, as much as 500*l.* is collected in this manner by a popular actor or actress. De Begnis told me he cleared *four hundred*, on this occasion, and from the appearance of the house, he could not have exaggerated.

"Unfortunately I am deprived of the pleasure of the bull-fights, and a Spanish play, as both these amusements are prohibited during the Lent season; but a

masquerade ball gave me an opportunity of seeing one of the finest theatres, perhaps, in the world. Eight thousand persons were assembled within its walls, while the streets presented the appearance of a carnival. In consequence of the slave trade, which is carried on here to a frightful extent, in spite of all British exertion to the contrary (being privately encouraged, or, I should rather say, permitted, by the Spanish government), several of our ships of war are either in port or cruising about in the neighbourhood; and one of the captains in his uniform was accosted by a masked lady, who so fascinated the gallant commander, that after much solicitation and the assurance of a good supper, she exhibited her features to the astonished officer, who gazed with wonder on the face of one of his own midshipmen.

“The city is finely situated, with one of the best harbours in the old or new world. It is strongly fortified, intrenched and walled. The antique and venerable looking churches, convents, prisons, forts, &c., give an appearance of age. The streets are very narrow, without side-walks, and crowded with carriages and carts besides multitudes on foot, of every colour and variety of the human species, from the potent Spanish Nabob to the miserable mulatto and slave. The buildings are generally from two to three stories high, without an window glass, and built of stone. The population is about 180,000, nearly half of which, however, live without the walls. There are several fine public squares ornamented with and supplied by fountains of water. In one of these squares, opposite the Governor’s palace, one of the finest military bands I ever heard plays to moonlight; and such sounds in such a climate render the scene perfectly enchanting.

“Formerly, the government of this important island containing above a million of inhabitants, with a stan-

ing army of 22,000 capital troops, was intrusted to men totally unworthy of such an important charge, and in consequence, it became little better than a nest of pirates, swindlers, and common thieves; but under the vigorous administration of Tacon, who was sent out by the Spanish authorities at home, about twelve years since, as Captain General, Havannah, and indeed the entire colony has become a very different place;—and although Tacon has ceased to be governor, the community are still enjoying the blessings of his laws and regulations.

“I travelled by railroad about fifty miles into the interior, and there our party engaged riding horses, and a *volante*, as their carriages are called, to carry us to Matanzas. I wish I had time and space to give you a full description of our two days’ journey through cocoa-nut, palm, and orange trees, sugar and coffee plantations; armed, according to the custom here, with pistols and swords nearly as long as ourselves. I have suffered greatly from the mosquitoes, who appear to have formed a far stronger affection for me, than for any of my companions.

“On Sunday I return to Havannah, and shall sail for New York early in April, and steam to England by the *Great Western* on the 9th of May. Perhaps I may have the pleasure of seeing you in London during my Haymarket engagement, but at any rate you may expect me at the time I usually visit Dublin, from about the end of November to the middle of December. Nothing has reached me from England since the 1st of January, and you may imagine how anxiously I am anticipating my return to the States, where I expect to find a post-office full of letters, waiting my arrival. You cannot think how much I shall miss Colonel D’Aguilar, who, I presume, has by this time received his brevet rank, and

has in consequence, removed from Ireland. Commercial business in the States has been in a deplorable condition, and of course theatricals have not flourished. Mrs. Fitzwilliam has been perhaps the most attractive star, take her for all in all. I have acted so seldom, in consequence of ill-health, and partly from the manner in which I have been treated in money matters, that I may say in truth 'I have lost a year.'

"Pray remember me most kindly to Mrs. C——, and give my love to the children, and do not forget to mention me to C——, to whom I send every kind wish. Let me hope that I have not exhausted your patience, as completely as I have filled this paper, having hardly space left to assure you how delighted I shall be to see you again, or to subscribe myself, your sincere friend,

"CHARLES KEAN.

"Not having my writing-desk with me, and finding it impossible to get sealing-wax, pray excuse the wafer."

On the 1st of June, 1840, Charles Kean commenced his second engagement at the Haymarket, which continued for thirty nights. *Hamlet*, as usual, was his opening part, followed by *Richard*, *Shylock*, and *Sir Giles Overreach*. On Monday the 6th of July, he added *Macbeth*, for the first time, to his list of London characters. In this, the most metaphysically complicated, perhaps, amongst all the mighty conceptions of Shakespeare, his performance equalled the sanguine expectations of his friends, and it has ever since been considered one of his ablest delineations. In the last act, in particular, he was singularly majestic: his death scene was entirely original. *Macbeth* had never been ranked amongst his father's greatest efforts. It had magnificent passages, but they were insulated. As a whole, there was something wanting of sustained power, with indications of

incomplete study. On the present revival at the Haymarket, the play was very carefully produced; it ran fifteen nights, and materially served both the theatre and the actor of the leading character. On the first night, the applause was enthusiastic and unanimous; on the second, a few expressions of disapprobation were heard, which were ever after continued by the exceptional minority who thought proper to indulge in them. That this was a systematic opposition became so evident, that the most strenuous efforts were used to detect the parties who so obviously placed themselves in direct opposition to the general voice of the public. But these efforts led to no result, beyond the actual conviction that a planned conspiracy was in existence, the authors and agents of which conducted their proceedings with an impenetrable mystery, not even surpassed by the *Vehme gericht* of the middle-ages, or the more recent *Tugend-bund* of modern Germany. They enjoyed their malice and escaped exposure, but this was all the advantage they gained; while on the other hand, the duration of Mr. Charles Kean's engagement, which ran to thirty nights, was more than doubled by the corresponding attraction.

After the first representation of *Macbeth*, which Charles Kean selected for his benefit on the 3d of July, we find this notice in the *Morning Post*:—

“Bravo! bravo! Kean! Kean!” the congratulatory cheers which greeted the *beneficiare* last night, are still ringing in our ears. We never remember to have witnessed a more signal triumph. The stage at the fall of the curtain presented the appearance of a *rendange* of *bouquets*. The horticultural *fête* which is to take place this afternoon will not be able to compete with the Haymarket show of flowers; and well did Mr. Kean

deserve the tributes which were so plentifully bestowed upon him by his fair admirers. As for obtaining a place in the theatre, that has been out of the question ever since the announcement of Mr. Kean's first appearance in *Macbeth*. The private boxes were crowded to excess, the dress circle was densely thronged, and the upper regions appeared to groan under the weight of the countless masses who came to see whether the son would inherit the transcendent talents of the father in his conception of this great character, which has time out of mind been universally acknowledged to be the most magnificent production of Shakespeare's fertile genius.

"On his first coming forward, Mr. Kean was enthusiastically received, and appeared somewhat embarrassed and thrown off his balance at making his first appearance before the English public in this difficult part. In a moment, however, he cast aside all hesitation, and plunged headlong and gallantly into the yawning gulf and fearful whirlpool of conflicting emotions and passions, which soured the milk of human kindness in the breast of *Macbeth*.

"Mr. Kean's success last evening was one of the most brilliant which has ever been recorded in the annals of the drama. Throughout the whole play he continued to achieve a succession of triumphs, far too numerous for us to record; and at the last, instead of being exhausted by the stupendous exertions he had undergone, he appeared to have gained fresh vigour and inspiration with every successive effort, and fought his last fight, and died, like a stern soldier, with his harness on his back—just as Edmund Kean did before him; and it would be impossible to accord higher praise. But of Mr. Kean, as the actor of last night, we saw or thought nothing. It was *Macbeth*, *Macbeth*, *Macbeth*. Ever and anon he appeared before us. First, attired in

the plaid of the wild highlander, with the weird sisters on the heath; next, led on by the diabolical instigation of his wife to stain his hands with the blood of his confiding sovereign; and then—we yet shudder and quail at the hideous workings of remorse which tore his heart-strings asunder in the spectre-dagger scene—he threw his words upon us like thunderbolts, and not a soul within the confines of the theatre but felt a weight off his mind when he discovers that he is the dupe of his own disordered brain. It were vain to attempt giving any description of the effect produced by Mr. Kean's utterance of the few simple words—‘There's no such thing.’ This and the closing scene are the two grand *coups de main* by which he carried away such a splendid harvest of admiration and congratulation. The various costumes worn by Mr. Kean last evening, were some of the most superb ever seen upon the stage. When he appeared in the robes of usurped majesty, his sumptuous attire was well worthy of a monarch.* It consisted of a rich crimson velvet tunic, or gaberline, on which hung a mantle of dark green velvet, lined with ermine. His other dresses, though necessarily not gorgeous, were remarkable for elegance and simplicity.

“Mr. Kean derived great assistance from, and was very ably seconded by, Mrs. Warner, who sustained the character of *Lady Macbeth* with great intenseness and energy. At the fall of the curtain, Mr. Kean was loudly called for, and at length came forward, and received a tremendous fire of applause. He had ‘to bide the pelt-ing of a pitiless storm’ of *bouquets*. An announcement was then given forth that the manager had entered into a fresh engagement with the attractive star for

* Such commendation would not now, nineteen years later, be bestowed upon a very inappropriate costume, which, however rich and graceful, was quite out of character.

ten more nights. This led to a second ebullition of Bravo!"

The variety of opinions delivered by the press on Charles Kean's acting, during his round of performances at the Haymarket, and the biassed disposition by which some were so transparently dictated, called forth the following article in an Edinburgh paper of Monday the 6th of July, entitled,—

“CHARLES KEAN AND HIS LONDON CRITICS.

“The age of true criticism, like the age of chivalry, is gone. The legitimate drama is neglected by parties interested in the success of the illegitimate; and tragedians, comedians, and vocalists are now written down or up, in London, not according to their demerits or deserts, but in proportion as they are identified with parties sensitively alive to extraneous considerations. The criticism of the London press, as a whole, and in the light of a guide to judgment, is unworthy of perusal, otherwise than as a matter of composition; and the reason is, that it has become sectarian, and is influenced in what it puts forth or suppresses, by party spirit. In this state of things, the rising generation, whose opinions are unformed in respect of great plays and talented performers, is not fairly dealt with, while the public is cavalierly treated. It now forms its own estimate of performances and “stars,” and leaves interested flatterers to their adulation, and detractors to their spleen, unheeded; except to be smiled at with the remark, ‘Oh, yes; we understand!’

“We have ever been of opinion, that the best star-actor in any age, is he who, in his day, draws the best houses. It is to no purpose that we can be talked at to the contrary. Taste and fashion are incapable of mathematical demonstration, and are seldom, if ever, reformed by

the laboured analysis of special pleaders. What Mr. Macready is, he yet is, in spite of the London press being for or against him; and whether Charles Kean be an intellectual performer or not, is a question which it is too late in the day to agitate. Its purpose is seen by the public, who have made up their minds, and who persevere in going in crowds to see him in well-known parts.

"The *Polytechnic* of this month has an article, ably written, *as writing*, cutting up Mr. Charles Kean's *Hamlet*, and exposing, at the same time, the animus of a party writer at war, less with the popular tragedian, than with the public, who, by their crowded audiences on his nights of playing, show the uselessness of such isolated scolding and raving at merits which they gladly pay to see the exhibition of, and cheer and applaud into the bargain! How, in the name of fortune, could, or would, a prudent, thorough man of business like Mr. Webster give Mr. C. Kean a large weekly revenue, unless the public, who go along with him in his engagements, enable him to do so, and by the most convincing of all proofs of public appreciation—liberal payment, and praise besides? Some critics write and abuse managements, as if a management drove people into their theatres, and fleeced them of money at the point of the bayonet!

"We question much if all the writing *at* Mr. Kean, in some of the papers in an opposing interest, has kept a shilling out of the Haymarket treasury. On the contrary, it may have put it into people's heads to go and see the phenomenon of a 'bad actor,' being supported by crowds of all grades of a metropolitan population, and at the west end of London, too! Well, they go; and, instead of agreeing with the critic, they join in feeling double interest in the actor, who they think must

be somebody to be so abused, and to be able to withstand the shock on the support of full pockets and applauding houses.

“In his manners off the stage, Charles Kean is a *gentleman*; and precisely what is his recommendation to good society, is the secret cause of that perfect hatred which the vulgar and low-minded cannot conceal that they are eaten up with towards him. Those who win may well laugh on the resource of smiles and a princely income. We have pleasure in quoting the *Morning Post's* statement of Mr. Kean's reception, and the house which he drew last Friday. Had the article been a modern ‘critique,’ we should not have read it through; but as it reports what actually took place by an eye-witness of the facts, we have perused and herewith extract it.”

Then follows the notice in the *Morning Post*, which we have given above. About this time, Madame Vestris, who had assumed the sovereignty of Covent Garden Theatre in the preceding autumn, expressed a desire to engage Charles Kean, to perform with Miss Ellen Tree, on his now recognized terms of 50*l.* per night. Mr. Webster hearing this, offered him the same sum, with half a benefit, for twenty nights during three successive seasons, which offer he accepted. The Haymarket Theatre thus became, for a time, his London home.



CHAPTER XVIII.

FAREWELL BENEFIT OF WILLIAM DOWTON AT THE OPERA HOUSE—NEGOTIATION OF CHARLES KEAN WITH SHERIDAN KNOWLES FOR A NEW PLAY—ENGAGEMENT AT BRIGHTON—THREATENED OPPOSITION OVERCOME—ROMEO AND JULIET AT THE HAYMARKET—EPIGRAM ON THE STRANGER—FAREWELL BENEFIT OF SAMUEL RUSSELL—MARRIAGE OF CHARLES KEAN WITH MISS ELLEN TREE—LEADING INCIDENTS OF HER THEATRICAL HISTORY—HER WONDERFUL ATTRACTION IN AMERICA—SHERIDAN KNOWLES'S ROSE OF ARRAGON, AT THE HAYMARKET—HIS EXCELLENCE AS A DRAMATIC WRITER—PURITY OF HIS FEMALE CHARACTERS—DEATH OF FREDERICK YATES—BRILLIANT AND SHORT CAREER OF ADELAIDE KEMBLE—SECOND ENGAGEMENT OF CHARLES KEAN AT DRURY LANE—HOSTILITY RENEWED.

ON Monday, the 8th of June, 1840, the veteran William Dowton took his farewell benefit at the Opera House, in the Haymarket. That theatre was selected, as its vast size could accommodate the looked-for crowds. According to the date on his tombstone, at Norwood Cemetery, he must then have reached his seventy-seventh year—the only actor except Macklin who continued to wear his harness to such an advanced period. But he was robust and hale as Cornaro himself, who corroborated his own system by living up to 104. Dowton for nearly half a century had enjoyed a first-class reputation, but it was found that when extreme old age came upon him he had saved no money. A powerful body of friends came forward to rescue him from impending want, by a benefit, with a general subscription. The "Poor Gentleman" was selected for performance, in which the aged actor appeared as *Sir Robert Bramble*. Sheridan Knowles delivered an

address, and Dowton spoke a few valedictory words. With the proceeds, an annuity for a given number of years was purchased, on the amount of which he subsisted in ease and comfort; but to the surprise of every one, by dint of regular habits and an iron constitution, he outlived the calculated time, and there was danger that he might be reduced to penury. He died on the 19th of August, 1849. Many leading unemployed members of the profession volunteered their services on the night of his benefit,—including W. Farren, Bartley, Harley, Cooper, Webster, Miss Ellen Tree, and Mrs. Glover.

Dowton was an actor of strong, correct conception, and sterling powers; hard and testy rather than rich or unctuous, and excellent in passionate old men. To these his own irritable temperament materially contributed. He was by far the best *Sir Anthony Absolute* of his day, and played the sleek hypocritical *Dr. Cantwell* with equal skill and discrimination. An anecdote connected with this part he used to relate himself. During a summer at the Lyceum, the play of the "Hypocrite" formed one of the leading attractions. A lady of fashion drove up to the box-office, and said, "When does Dowton next appear as *Dr. Cantwell*, and what places can I have?" "On Wednesday next, Madam," was the reply, "and you can have Box No. 3. The performance is for Mr. Dowton's benefit." "Oh!" exclaimed the liberal patroness, "I never go to benefits, and shall wait for another opportunity." Dowton, who happened to be standing in the hall, made her a profound bow as she took her departure, and uttered indignantly, "Thank you, Ma'am."

Dowton's *Falstaffs* were sound and judicious, but he lacked the jocund rolling eye, and the rich overflowing humour which should pour out involuntarily, constitu-

tionally, and, as it were, in spite of itself. In 1836, he ventured to cross the Atlantic, and visit the United States; but he was too far advanced in life to attract attention or draw money. He came back almost as poor as he went; but with a change in his political opinions, in which he has had more than one companion. He entered the land of freedom a furious republican,—he returned from it an ultra tory. He was constitutionally discontented, captious, and fretful, but at the same time warm-hearted and generous. His oddities were very amusing to those who were intimate with him. He would sit for hours in his dressing-room, arranging and contemplating his wigs, those important accessories to his stage make-up. One of his peculiar mannerisms was never to play a part without turning his wig, a process legitimately belonging to *Lingo*, in the ‘Agreeable Surprise.’ When he acted *Dr. Pangloss* (which, although not his London part, he constantly assumed on the Kent circuit, where he was for some years manager), a bet was made that here he would find his favourite manœuvre impracticable. He managed it nevertheless. When *Kenrick*, the faithful old Irish servant, comes in exultingly, in the last scene, to announce the long-lost *Henry Moreland*, he was instructed to run against *Dr. Pangloss*, who thus obtained the desired opportunity of disarranging his head-gear.

Downton undervalued the elder Kean, whose merit he could never be induced to acknowledge. When the vase was presented to that great actor by the committee and company of Drury Lane, he refused to subscribe, saying, ‘You may cup Mr. Kean if you please, but you shan’t bleed me.’ He said, too, the cup should be given to Joe Munden, for his performance of *Marall*. Amongst other eccentricities, he fancied (a delusion common to comedians) that he could play tragedy, and never rested

until he obtained an opportunity of showing the town that Edmund Kean knew nothing of *Shylock*. But the experiment was, as might have been expected, a total failure. The great point of novelty consisted in having a number of Jews in court, to represent his friends and partisans, during the trial scene; and in their arms he fainted, when told he was, per force, to become a Christian. The audience laughed outright, as a commentary on the actor's conception. Once he exhibited privately to the writer of these memoirs, the last scene of *Sir Giles Overreach*, according to his idea of the author's meaning. It occurred at supper, after a performance at Tunbridge Wells, in one of his own theatres, and a very mirthful tragedy it proved. He had a strange inverted idea, that Massinger intended *Sir Giles* for a comic character. He also fancied that he could play *Lord Ogleby*, when nature with her own hand had daguerreotyped him for *Mr. Sterling*. Such are the vagaries of genius, which are equally mournful and unaccountable.

Charles Kean, still anxious for an original part, having failed in his application to Sir Edward Bulwer, now sought to negotiate with Sheridan Knowles, and wrote to him as follows:—

“30, Old Bond-street.

“15th July, 1840.

“MY DEAR KNOWLES.—

“I am very sorry you should have left London without my seeing you, but I was under the impression that you went into the country on Tuesday and would return in a few days. On the other side I have written a few lines to which I hope you will subscribe, and with which I trust you will be satisfied.

“Sincerely yours,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

The accompanying agreement ran thus:—"Upon my approval of a new original play in five acts, written by James Sheridan Knowles, Esq., I will pay to the said James Sheridan Knowles, for the exclusive right of acting it in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and its dependencies, for three years, the sum of 600*l.* (six hundred pounds). On the third night of its being acted, the further sum of 50*l.*; on the sixth night, 50*l.*; on the ninth, fifteenth, twentieth, twenty-fifth, thirtieth, and fortieth, 50*l.* each, making in all, 1,000*l.* (one thousand pounds). In addition I give my consent to the printing of the play after it has been acted six nights, and for Mr. Knowles to derive all the advantages that may accrue therefrom."

This offer Mr. Knowles declined, and there, for the present, the negotiation ended. It has two remarkable features—the large remuneration which dramatic authors look for and receive in modern days, and the novelty of leading actors paying large sums for new plays, with which desirable commodity managers in the olden time were too happy to provide them, at their own expense, and for mutual advantage.

Soon after the conclusion of his Haymarket engagement, which wound up with "*Macbeth*," on the 7th of August, Charles Kean repaired to Brighton. But before he appeared there, some interest and a considerable difference of opinion had been stirred up in that fashionable suburb of London (as we may in truth now call it), by a misunderstanding which had arisen between Mr. J. Wallack and the managers of the Brighton theatre, leading to the publication of an angry correspondence between them. In this Mr. C. Kean's name was unnecessarily and prejudicially mixed up with a controversy in which he had not the most remote connexion, either directly or by implication. The facts of the case, briefly stated,

stood thus:—Very soon after Mr. C. Kean's return from the United States, he had been engaged to represent in Brighton *Hamlet*, *Richard*, and the range of Shakespearean parts he was in the known habit of performing. This engagement was to commence on the 7th of September, and to run seven nights. According to the usual and reasonable practice in such cases, it was expressly stipulated, that, for the interest of both parties to the contract, those particular characters should not be personated by any one in the interval. Subsequently Mr. Wallack was engaged, and his appearance was to precede that of Charles Kean by a fortnight. No stipulation was made as to what parts Mr. Wallack should perform, the presumption of the manager being that he (Mr. Wallack) would select them from amongst his usual run, and which certainly was not understood by theatrical people to include specially those reserved for Mr. Kean's engagement, but rather the reverse. A London actor when "starring" in the country is usually expected to be most attractive in the line which has won for him his London reputation, and to select the characters which he has made peculiarly his own. The agreement between Mr. Wallack and the Brighton manager was made in a loose manner. The omitted points ought to have been clearly defined at the time, and then no misunderstanding could have taken place; but for these omissions Mr. Kean, by no possible perversion of reasoning, could be rendered responsible, as he received no intimation of the Wallack engagement until a later period.

When the time for announcement duly arrived, Mr. Wallack gave the manager (Mr. Holmes) to understand, that he intended to commence with *Richard the Third*, and to follow up the first night by playing exactly those parts for which Mr. C. Kean was engaged. This arrangement, of course, would have amounted to a direct

violation of the contract with Mr. Kean, and the manager felt himself unable to accede to it. However, Mr. Kean, on being apprised of the difficulty, and requested to forego his claims, refused to do so, but at once offered to relinquish the engagement, if the manager considered it to stand in the way of his interest; and by which means Mr. Wallack might be entitled to play whatever he chose. This the manager declined. Mr. Wallack's engagement was consequently broken off, and in his published comments he complained bitterly of what he denounced as an unjust monopoly, and an unfair attempt to make private property of Shakespeare, to the exclusion of the great body of actors, who had an equal right in the reversionary succession. On general principles, there was reason in the argument; but it could not possibly bear on the individual case,—a previous engagement, based on specific stipulations; and which stipulations Mr. Wallack himself would undoubtedly have insisted on, had the relative positions been reversed.

Charles Kean, always reluctant to intrude himself on the public in any capacity beyond the direct exercise of his profession, paid no attention to the letters inserted in the local papers from the contending parties, or the comments made on them, tending to foment dissatisfaction, until his friends impressed on him the necessity of a reply, to set matters right before he appeared. Accordingly, he addressed the subjoined letter to the editor of the *Brighton Herald*, which produced the desired effect in the most conclusive manner:—

“Old Ship Hotel,
“31st Aug. 1840.

SIR,—

“A published correspondence between Mr. Holmes and Mr. Wallack, to which my attention has been

called, imposes on me the duty of submitting to your readers a brief statement of facts, and thereby enabling them to judge for themselves whether anything I have done or written justifies the observations which have been made upon my conduct.

“*Early in June*, shortly after my return from America, Mr. Charles Hill called upon me in London, and engaged me to perform seven nights at the Brighton Theatre, to commence on the 7th of September. It was *arranged* on that occasion, that I should appear as early in the season as possible, *for the express purpose of being the first visitor to personate the characters I am in the habit of performing* ; as I was naturally anxious that the attraction of those *particular characters* should not be diminished by previous representation. On this point I was the more urgent, as it was to be my first appearance, for two years, in a town where I had always been received with so much kindness. The manager assured me that he should be injuring *his own* interest, as well as *mine*, by adopting any other course ; and, had it suited his convenience, I *could* and *would*, for the reason above specified, have visited Brighton even earlier than the present period.

“*In the beginning of August*, a letter, written in answer to one of mine to the Brighton management on theatrical business, informed me for the first time that Mr. Charles Hill, who, I believe, had then left this country for America, had entrusted the control of the theatre to Mr. Holmes ; that an engagement had been entered into, about the 31st of July, with Mr. Wallack, to appear on the 17th of August ; and that he (Mr. Wallack) was anxious to perform *Richard, Hamlet, and Macbeth*.

“Upon receiving this information, I immediately reminded Mr. Holmes of the terms of the understanding which existed between Mr. Hill and myself, and at the

same time remarked, that I could not consent to any arrangement contrary to those terms; that the manager, however, *was perfectly at liberty to allow Mr. Wallack to perform the characters for which I had stipulated, before the 7th September if he chose; but that I should in such case consider myself released from the agreement with Mr. Hill.*

“This is, in substance, the whole of the intercourse between Mr. Hill, Mr. Holmes, and myself respectively, with reference to my engagement; and shows that, so far from my having ‘*interfered with the arrangements of others,*’ others have sought to interfere with mine; and that I may justly complain of such interference, when, after having formed an engagement early in the season, for the *express purpose, and on the condition of being the first in the field,* I find another performer, with an engagement made *long after mine,* endeavouring to anticipate by *only a fortnight, the very characters for which I had stipulated.*

“The course Mr. Wallack has thought proper to pursue in involving my name in the controversy between him and Mr. Holmes is to be regretted, and the more so, as the *real* question at issue seems to be one between those two parties alone.

“In conclusion, I beg to assure you that I never in any way, either directly or indirectly, presumed to appropriate to myself any character or characters, and most especially those of Shakespeare, held to be the common property of all actors; but that my engagement was formed solely with the object I have already expressed; and it must be well known to all persons familiar with theatrical matters, that the frequent representation of the same characters in a provincial theatre does not advance the interest either of the manager or of the actor. I disclaim most unreservedly the intention of injuring the

prospects of any member of my profession, and as unfeignedly repeat my regret that circumstances should have caused, for the first time in my life, the vindication of my conduct to become the subject of discussion in a public journal.

“I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

The Brighton engagement proved an additional triumph. The correspondent of the *Morning Post* thus communicated the result of the first night:—

“*Brighton, Sept. 8.*—After the recent correspondence in which the name of the popular actor, Mr. Charles Kean, was involved, it was fully expected that his reception on the Brighton boards last night would not have been altogether of so gratifying a character as he has been accustomed to experience in this town. Every part of the house was quite filled, and the boxes included a large sprinkling of fashionable company. “*Hamlet*” was the play, and on the first appearance of the *Ghost*, the gallery loudly applauded; and the moment Mr. Kean entered upon the scene, a simultaneous burst of welcome proceeded from the pit and boxes, a great portion of the company standing. If there was any displeasure shown in the gallery, which we did not hear, it was completely lost in the cheers from the boxes, which lasted for upwards of a minute. The house then became perfectly silent, and the play proceeded. His *Hamlet* was a beautiful performance; he appeared to have derived fresh vigour from the cordial reception. He was frequently interrupted by loud plaudits from all parts of the house, and when the manager came on to announce the performance for the following evening, there were loud calls for Kean. The actor obeyed the

mandate, and bowed his acknowledgments, retiring amidst unbounded applause. He plays *Claude Melnotte* to-night, and repeats *Hamlet* on Saturday."

This Brighton episode, which at one time threatened a storm, having blown over, Charles Kean continued his usual progress through the country, and again visited the leading towns in which he had won much of his early reputation. Everywhere he found his attraction unvarying, and with each succeeding year his fame and fortune steadily advanced together.

On the 17th of May, 1841, his performances at the Haymarket were resumed with "*Macbeth*." This third engagement, like the two preceding ones, extended far beyond the term specified in the contract, and reached thirty-seven nights. "*Macbeth*" and "*Romeo and Juliet*" were the two prevailing attractions, the former being repeated ten, the latter twelve nights. During this season, Charles Kean performed the *Stranger*, for the first time in London, which gave rise to the following epigram in one of the weekly papers:—

"WHICH IS THE STRANGER?

"On those cocks of the scene,
Macready and Kean,
We thus may decide without danger;
Throughout all its range,
Though Macready is strange,
Yet Kean, of the two, is the *Stranger*."

In "*Romeo and Juliet*" the heroine was performed by Miss Ellen Tree; the *Mercutio* being Mr. J. Wallack. The play was produced under the direction of Charles Kean, affording the first stamp of that rare combination of taste and judgment which he has since carried to such perfection in the Shakespearean revivals at the Princess's Theatre.

On the 1st of July, 1840, "Macbeth" was performed for the benefit and farewell of Samuel Thomas Russell, a very old actor, who had been attached to the London theatres upwards of forty years. On this occasion Kean contributed a donation of 20*l*. Russell was generally known in the profession by the sobriquet of "Jerry Sneak," from his excellence in that one character; just as "Single Speech" Hamilton obtained his distinctive pre-nomen from a solitary display of eloquence in the more exalted theatre of St. Stephen's. But here, as Lord Byron says, "all likeness ends between the pair;" for we never heard that Jerry Sneak Russell was suspected of being Junius, while it is certain that Single Speech Hamilton was included in the list of nominees to the unacknowledged but somewhat dangerous authorship of the far-famed letters.

Charles Kean's third Haymarket engagement terminated on the 6th of August. On the 29th of January, 1842, occurred the most auspicious event in his life—the wisest step he had ever taken—and the surest guarantee of his future prosperity. He was married at the church of St. Thomas, in Dublin, to Miss Ellen Tree; a mutual attachment of long standing, and in every respect "a well-assorted union." By this, Charles Kean not only secured his domestic happiness, but obtained a large addition to his worldly means, and an invaluable co-operator in his theatrical career. By a rare combination of private and professional excellence, Miss Ellen Tree had already acquired a handsome independence, and had placed herself in the foremost rank of the distinguished females whose names shed lustre on the history of the British drama. In characters requiring great physical power, with the sterner and more commanding attributes, something might be wanting in which she had been excelled by a few of her predeces-

sors ; but in all the softer delineations, in a just discrimination of the tenderer and more womanly passions, in versatility, in natural pathos, or elegant vivacity,—in a clear comprehension of her author's meaning, and in lady-like deportment—she was, and is, without a superior on the modern stage.

Miss E. Tree (now Mrs. C. Kean) is one of four sisters who all evinced a predilection for the drama at very early years. Their father held a situation in the East India House. The mother still lives, happy in “a green old age,” in the full possession of her faculties, a remarkable instance of health and longevity. Before Ellen appeared on the boards, the name of Tree had already become celebrated by the performance of the elder sister, Maria, an acting vocalist of superior ability, who will long be remembered, in conjunction with Miss Stephens and Miss Paton, as upholding the charms of pure English song, with combined though varied excellence, at the same theatre (Covent Garden), during several brilliant seasons. Miss Maria Tree, in 1825, married Mr. Bradshaw, a gentleman of fortune, sometime member for Canterbury, and retired from professional life, too soon for the public, although infinitely to her own happiness and advantage.

Miss E. Tree first appeared in public, at Covent Garden, when scarcely seventeen, as *Olivia* in “Twelfth Night,” for her sister's benefit. She next acted in Edinburgh and Bath, and after a period of successful practice, obtained an engagement at Drury Lane,—her opening part being *Violante*, in the “Wonder.” On this occasion one of her most eminent predecessors, Mrs. Davison, assumed the subordinate duties of *Flora*. To *Violante* succeeded *Letitia Hardy*, *Albina Manderville*, *Rosalie Somers*, *Charlotte*, in the “Hypocrite,” and *Miss Hardcastle*, in all of which she rapidly advanced in public favour, until the production of the “Youthful

Queen," when her admirable performance of *Christina* established her as a permanent London favourite.

In 1829, her services were transferred to Covent Garden, where she appeared in the character of *Lady Townly*. *Françoise de Foix*, in Miss Fanny Kemble's play of "Francis the First" was the first part that gave even herself a notion that she could act tragedy. This induced her to play *Romeo* for her benefit, to Miss Kemble's *Juliet*, which hazardous attempt she achieved with singular success, all the newspapers being unanimous in her praise. In 1832, she made her first visit to Dublin, in which city she was the original representative of *Julia*, in the "Hunchback," when Sheridan Knowles appeared as *Master Walter* in his own play. The period was one of cholera and dreary political agitation, which hung heavily on the fortunes of the theatre; nevertheless, Ellen Tree, during that short introduction, established a good understanding with her new audience, which increased with every succeeding engagement. During Mr. Bunn's management of both the national theatres, she appeared as *Myrrha*, in "Sardanapalus," which she studied in a few hours when the negotiation (real or fictitious) with Mrs. Mardyn fell through. After this, she represented *Rachel*, the heroine in the successful play of the "Jewess," which ran upwards of a hundred nights. At the close of the Drury Lane season, she went to the Haymarket, where she proved very attractive in *Viola*, in "Twelfth Night," in a new drama called the "Ransom," and in the youthful hero of Serjeant Talfourd's classical tragedy of "Ion," which ran thirty nights to great houses. Between the years 1836 and 1839, she visited America, and during a lengthened sojourn of two years and nine months, traversed the whole extent of the United States, winning everywhere golden opinions, and bearing away

a substantial harvest of enduring metal. Few English performers have been so universally attractive. The sum realized amounted to 12,000*l.*, which speaks for itself. After a short engagement at the Haymarket, on her return from America, she migrated once more to Covent Garden, where she performed the *Countess of Eppenstein*, in Knowles's "Love," for fifty-two consecutive nights. During the year 1840, Leigh Hunt's play of a "Legend of Florence," was produced at Covent Garden. The author and the management were unwilling to offer what appeared such an insignificant part as *Genevra* to an actress of her high standing and attraction; but she saw in it the opportunity which she amply verified, in the overpowering effect of one agonizing burst, "Good God! what have I done?"

If we were to select the two characters in which Mrs. C. Kean appeared to the greatest advantage, before she glided into the more matronly line which she now fills, we should name *Rosalind* and *Viola*. Perhaps the latter was the most faultless performance on the modern stage. It presented one of the sweetest creations of Shakespeare's fancy, embodied as exactly as if the accomplished representative had been foreseen by the imagination of the author. In figure, features, expression, and elegant propriety of costume, in the delicate humour of the lighter points, and the exquisite pathos of the serious passages, the portrait was one in which the most exceptionable caviller would have been taxed to discover a defective feature, or suggest an improvement.

Not many years since, we happened to sit in the stalls of the Princess's Theatre, next to an enthusiastic septuagenarian, who proved to be anything but one of Horace's types of old age, represented by the satirist, as—

"Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero."

He remembered Mrs. Jordan as *Viola*, during the zenith of her reputation. We entered into talk, and he volunteered a comparison. Mrs. Jordan, he said, was, on the whole, inferior to Mrs. C. Kean. She had greater breadth, higher colouring, more exuberant spirits, and a broad-wheeled laugh peculiar to herself, which bore down every thing before it; but all this, he added, would appear coarse and vulgar to modern ideas of refinement. In personal requisites, in elegance and delicacy of manner, in the grace of sentiment and general finish, the picture was incomplete, and much less agreeable than that presented by her successor.

The marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean took place on the last day of their Dublin engagement, and on that same evening, by an odd but accidental coincidence, they performed together in the "Honeymoon." For private and professional reasons of their own, the union was not immediately made public. Their first appearance in the acknowledged characters of man and wife occurred at Glasgow, on the 27th of the following February, the combined attraction producing, in five performances, included in one week, the sum of 1,000*l*.

On the 4th of April, 1842, they commenced a joint engagement at the Haymarket, which extended over fifty-two nights, comprised within a period of little more than three months, and ending on the 16th of July. "As You Like It," the "Gamester," and the "Lady of Lyons," were frequently repeated; but the chief novelty consisted in a new play by Sheridan Knowles, called the "Rose of Arragon"—the same for which Charles Kean had offered 1,000*l*. a year or two before, but which the author now placed at the disposal of the Haymarket manager on much less advantageous terms. This play succeeded in representation, and

commanded twenty-five consecutive repetitions; but it has vanished entirely from the permanent acting list, and must be looked upon as one of the least agreeable productions of a very superior dramatist.

James Sheridan Knowles has long ceased to write for the stage, and has merged into a theological controversialist, or lay preacher, in the Baptist communion; carrying into his newly selected avocation the same fervid enthusiasm which marked the preceding phases of his chequered career. Under these circumstances, we may speak of him, dramatically considered, as belonging to history. Of his fifteen plays, which will all live in print, six at least are likely to keep possession of the stage as long as the stage lasts in the United Kingdom. These are, "Virginius," "William Tell," the "Hunchback," the "Wife," the "Love Chase," and "Love." After the production of the last, the pen of Knowles moved heavily, and his poetic imagination began to grow torpid. If votes were collected by ballot to decide on the comparative pretensions of all the dramatic writers of the present age, we are inclined to think a large majority would assign the first post of honour to Knowles, and select "Virginius" as the best acting play of modern times. Sharp criticism has pointed out some trifling incongruities in the arrangement of the plot, occasional slips in the diction, and a weakness approaching to anti-climax in the fifth act; but sharp criticism investigates with a microscopic eye, and could detect a flaw in the Pitt diamond, or the Koh-i-noor. The more enlarged and liberal gaze of admiration embraces beauty in the mass, and bestows no thought on an almost imperceptible blemish.

In opposition to the verdict in favour of "Virginius," we shall be told that a subject selected from history, which the adopter finds ready to his hand, draws less

upon his genius than one which he must invent. Many authors can write good dialogue who are unable to construct effective plots, or to work up telling situations. The late Douglas Jerrold may be quoted as an example. Beaumont excelled in the one branch, Fletcher in the other. Hence they worked well together, and the conjunction saved time and trouble, while it insured success. For this reason modern French dramatists ordinarily run in couples, and not unfrequently in leashes. So it is with the fashioners of the garments we wear. One passes competition in the cut of a coat, another stands alone in a waistcoat, and a third baffles rivalry in the graceful folds of the nether integuments. But it is most rare to find one pair of shears equally excellent in a complete suit. We once heard an author, of first-rate executive skill, say, "I have no inventive faculty; I cannot imagine a plot. Furnish me with that, and you shall have such a play as you require in a fortnight." The writer alluded to was offered his own price, and would have had no objection to increase his already ample worldly store by a good round sum.

Viewed in the light here stated, such entirely original plays as the "Hunchback," the "Wife," the "Daughter," the "Love Chase," and "Love," are entitled to take rank in a class superior to those selected from historical annals, although embellished with all the charms of poetry, and the full force of distinct, identical character. Yet the great Greek fathers of the drama, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, invariably drew from the legendary or traditional lore handed down to them through recorded history and mythology. The diction, the imagery, the philosophical reflections, the moral, the consequences, the effect upon human transactions, the happiness resulting from virtue, the misery inseparable from crime;—all these arise, and are em-

bodied as they arise, from that innate power possessed by the writers of conveying what they feel; but the power and the feeling are not engendered from imaginary or poetical possibilities;—they are derived from the study of real events.

Gibbon, in writing of the Emperor Heraclius, has divided his public life into three distinct epochs—the opening, the meridian, and the decline. The first and last, comparatively inferior; the central, effulgent in greatness. It is so with Knowles in reference to the order of his plays. The earliest and the latest* are not those by which his genius can be estimated. The produce of his mature manhood has elevated him to this exalted post in the temple of Fame; and by this posterity will test his comparative excellence. It is interesting to the curious inquirer as a study, that *all* the productions of a great writer should be preserved; but the accompanying reflection, *nemo fuit unquam sic compar sibi*, presents itself with almost inseparable certainty. Even Homer slumbered sometimes; and there are passages attributed to Shakespeare which we should like to feel convinced he had never written.

Knowles has evidently built himself on the dramatists of the Elizabethan age, with their immediate successors and followers;—a school which has been pedantically quoted, and cried up *ad nauseam*, and in imitating which many have totally failed. He, their most successful imitator, has much of their vigour and intensity, their nature, their strong sense of the harrowing and pathetic, their power of condensed expression, and sometimes more than their flowing poetry. He occasionally copies their conceits, and deviates into their verbal obscurity; but he never emulates their coarse-

* "Leo the Gipsy," "Brian Boroihme," "Caius Gracchus," and "Alfred," were written before "Virgilius."

ness, or heightens a plot by their unnatural and revolting extravagance. Above all, he draws woman as if he loved and revered her,—with a delicate and admiring hand, with a fervent and devoted heart. His female portraitures present no Clytemnestras, Messalinas, Medeas, or Lady Macbeths. He reserves the dark, the stormy, and the evil passions for the workings of man's heart, and the process of man's machinations. He contemplates woman in the abstract, as *Jaffier* looks with rapturous affection on *Belvidera* in the individual:—

“ Sure you were made
To temper man ;—we had been brutes without you.
Angels were painted fair to look like you ;
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven—
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.”

Knowles's delineations of the softer sex are unexceptionably beautiful. They are finished with a grace and delicacy which Shakespeare only can excel, and entitle him to a laurel wreath, entwined by the fair fingers of the loveliest and the most exalted in the land. We are truly rejoiced at this opportunity of rendering feeble tribute to the first of living dramatists, who combine the truth and energy of the giants of an earlier age entirely divested of those errors in taste which blacken and deform many of their most resplendent passages.*

On the 21st of June, 1842, poor Frederick Yates died, at the premature age of forty-five. The immediate cause of his decease was the second or third rupture of a blood-vessel, which occurred on the 26th of March, while he was rehearsing a new part on the stage.

* In 1847, the Whigs offered Knowles a pension of 100*l.* a-year, which, though poor, he indignantly declined. It has since been augmented to 200*l.*, which he now enjoys. It was intended to have made him curator of Shakespeare's birth-place, at Stratford-on-Avon, with suitable endowment, but both plans failed from want of funds.

of the Dublin Theatre, preparatory to the commencement of an engagement on the following day. He went home to his hotel, and never appeared in public again. He was an actor of very versatile powers, and of indefatigable activity as a manager. After a most successful novitiate in Edinburgh, he made his first bow at Covent Garden as *Iago*, on the 7th of November, 1818, on which occasion Young was the *Othello*, C. Kemble, *Cassio*, and Miss O'Neill, *Desdemona*. During the season he played *Falstaff*; *Gloster* in "Jane Shore;" *Berthold*, a very striking part in an unsuccessful tragedy by Maturin; *Sylvester Daggerwood*, and *Casca*; *Flexible*, an imitation of Mathews; *Rob Roy*, *Shylock*, and *Dick* in the "Apprentice." But his *hit* was in "Cozening," an interlude written expressly for him, in which he personated seven different characters. This little piece ran for nearly thirty nights. Yates would have held much higher ground than he ultimately attained if he had confined himself to a more restricted line, and had abstained from imitation, the constant practice of which infected his originality, and infused itself into his natural manner almost without his own consciousness. But it must be admitted that his imitations were almost as good as those of Mathews, his friend and model.

Yates married Miss Brunton, one of the most delightful actresses of her day,* whether in tragedy or comedy, as well as a thoroughly amiable woman, and has left an only son, who has acquired distinction in several fields of literature.

This same year, 1842, witnessed also the short but dazzling career of another scion of the gifted family of Kemble,—Adelaide, the second daughter of Charles Kemble, who flashed with the brightness of a meteor

* She came out at Covent Garden as *Letitia Hardy*, on the 12th of September, 1817, and has retired for many years.

across the theatrical horizon, and left a long train of light behind her when she disappeared. Had she continued on the stage, and devoted herself to tragedy alone, independent of her extraordinary vocal powers, she would have carried away the palm from nearly all competitors. She resembled Pasta in style, and her illustrious aunt in appearance, although not on the same majestic scale. Her brief course lasted only from the 20th of November, 1841, to the 23d of December, 1842. No succeeding English singer has rivalled her excellence in the art musical, while acting remains almost a sealed book to the whole race of nightingales.

During the summer of 1843, Charles Kean concluded his three years' contract at the Haymarket. On this occasion he appeared without his wife for twenty nights, Mrs. C. Kean being unable to support him, in consequence of her approaching confinement with their only child, a daughter, born on the 18th of September in that year. During the subsequent winter he entered into another single engagement with Mr. Bunn, at Drury Lane, receiving the same payment as in 1838. In the course of this term, "Richard the Third" was produced in a style of unprecedented magnificence, with historical costumes and appointments. The hostile clique which had so perseveringly attended Charles Kean at the Haymarket, followed him to the changed scene of action. Night after night, penetrating above the loud applauses of the great majority of the house, the two or three dissentient voices made themselves conspicuously audible. Wherever the actor went in London, they dogged his steps, and sought to check his popularity and inward satisfaction, as the slave danced in mockery before the chariot of the Roman conqueror throughout his triumphal progress. The most extraordinary feature of this strange persecution was, that the instigators, whoever

they might be, must have carried it on at the expense of their pockets—a test of malevolence which the most determined enemy usually shrinks from, and which proves the personal animosity in this instance to have been deeply rooted indeed. Malice will make great sacrifices, and encounter risk and labour, to attain a cherished object;—in short, do all but dive into its own course. When it goes that length, and pays for indulgence, the exception parallels a black swan in rarity. Lord Byron, echoing Machiavelli, in verse, says, with rue knowledge of human nature,—

“ Kill a man’s family, and he may brook it ;
But keep your hands out of his breeches-pocket.”

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN VISIT AMERICA TOGETHER—RESIDENCE THERE FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS—ENORMOUS RECEIPTS OF THE FIRST YEAR—THE WIFE'S SECRET—KING JOHN—RICHARD THE THIRD—RETURN TO ENGLAND—SHORT VISIT TO DUBLIN—APPEARANCE AT THE HAYMARKET IN THE WIFE'S SECRET—SUCCESSFUL RUN OF THE NEW PLAY—GENERAL ATTRACTION OF THE ENGAGEMENT—PRIVATE THEATRICALS AT WINDSOR CASTLE—CHARLES KEAN APPOINTED DIRECTOR BY HER MAJESTY—DIFFICULTIES ATTENDANT ON THE POST—HE PRESIDES AT THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE GENERAL THEATRICAL FUND—SPEECHES ON THAT OCCASION—RETIREMENT AND DEATH OF MRS. GLOVER.

AMERICA has always been considered an "El Dorado" by the leading actors of the London stage,—a safe reserve to retreat on should home attraction slumber or threaten to decline. The truth of the hypothesis has generally established itself by successful experiment. The most remarkable instance to the contrary happened in the case of Madame Vestris and Mr. Charles Mathews, which infinitely surpassed all previous calculation. Their want of the expected success could not be traced to any affectation of squeamish propriety because they bore different names; for they were married, and the marriage publicly announced before they left England. Many said that the lady would subdue by her exquisite taste in costume if not by her talent; that she would conquer with her wardrobe if she failed with her eyes and voice. They who thought so, forgot that the fashionable dames of New York are the most showy dressers in the world and watch the latest Parisian novelties with restless anticipation. Some asserted that the clever couple

were received coldly because C. Mathews's father had offended American nationality by an extravagant caricature of their peculiarities. This could hardly be, for their own actors had done the same, although it is true they might tolerate in one "native and to the manner born" what they refused to permit in an impertinent "Britisher." But no matter what might be the cause, the case proved an exception to the standard rule.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean (the latter in particular) were desirous of paying another visit to the many kind friends they had formerly made in the great Western Republic. A very tempting offer presenting itself, they laid aside several excellent engagements at home, and in the summer of 1845 once more embarked for the United States. Being at Liverpool for that purpose, they crossed over to Dublin to take a temporary leave of their Irish patrons, and performed two nights, on the 28th and 29th of July, to crowded houses, and sailed from the shores of England on the 2d of August following. Throughout the Union their success was everywhere "prodigious." By the close of the first year they realized and sent safely home a greater profit than had ever before been accomplished on the same prolific ground within the same time. A new play, called "The Wife's Secret," which they imported with them, proved invariably attractive wherever it was performed. This play, a production of sterling merit, combining beauty of language with powerful dramatic incident and situation, was written by Mr. G. Lovell, already well known to the literary and theatrical world by the "Merchant of Bruges," "Love's Sacrifice," the novel of the "Trustee," and many contributions to leading periodicals. The "Wife's Secret" was purchased by Kean, who fully relied on the talent of his author, for the large sum of 400*l.*, before it was commenced. In

the year 1846, Charles Kean ventured on an experiment never before hazarded in America—the production of the two historical tragedies of “King John” and “Richard the Third,” on a scale of splendour which no theatre in London or Paris could have surpassed. The scenery, the decorations, the banners, armorial bearings, heraldic blazonry, groupings, weapons of war, costumes, furniture, and all the minor details were so correctly studied that the most scrutinizing reader of Montfaucon or Meyrick would have been puzzled to detect an error. But our brethren of the stars and stripes are utilitarians rather than antiquaries; more inclined to look in advance than to turn over pages of the past, or to pore into ancient chronicles. They appeared not to understand or enjoy with a perfect zest the pomp of feudal royalty, and the solemn display of baronial privileges. The upshot of all was that the expenditure far exceeded the return, and the produce of the second year bore no comparison with that of the first.

In the summer of 1847, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean left the shores of America (where they had found a second home) with many grateful reminiscences, and once more landed safely in England. Their first act on arriving at home was one of disinterested kindness. Hearing, through a mutual friend, that the lessee of the Dublin Theatre had, during their absence, been less prosperous than his well-wishers desired, or his unremitting exertions might have justified him in expecting, they proceeded at once, after scarcely any interval of repose, to Ireland, and volunteered to perform for his benefit. The attraction of these powerful auxiliaries, added to the personal popularity of the manager, produced a house crowded by all the rank and fashion of the Irish metropolis. The play selected was the “Jealous Wife,” in which Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean appeared (for the first time

in Europe) as *Mr. and Mrs. Oakly*. The Lord-Lieutenant, the Earl of Clarendon, who had very lately entered on his office, was there, with the Countess, and the usual viceregal suite. There were also present Sir Edward Blakeney, the commander of the forces in Ireland; Prince George of Cambridge, commanding the district; the Lord Mayor, with other civic dignitaries; many of the leading judges and barristers, and nearly all the officers of the garrison. A more brilliant assemblage has seldom been collected together within the walls of a theatre. Their Excellencies, the Lord-Lieutenant and his Lady, expressed warm approbation of the performance, and on the following Saturday, the 31st of July, repeated their visit to the theatre, in state, commanding the appearance of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean in the comedy of the "*Wonder*." This led to a second house, as numerous as the former one. They had thus the satisfaction of rendering a double service to an old and valued friend at a very critical juncture.

After going through a series of engagements, all settled before they had sailed for America, in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Dublin, they returned to London, to recommence operations at the Haymarket Theatre, early in January, 1848. They were, as a matter of course, disposed to start with their acknowledged round of Shakespearean characters, but were strongly urged not to do so by more than one judicious friend who had closely watched the shifting temperature of theatrical politics during their absence, and wisely counselled them against this very natural course, which, they said, would assuredly lead to a revival of the old opposition, with added virulence. The advisers had no positive proof to produce, no tangible evidence of premeditated conspiracy, nothing beyond the strong conviction which sometimes impresses itself on the mind, and cannot be

shaken by the absence of logical demonstration. They were convinced of the fact, and spoke accordingly. Acting on this suggestion, which entirely accorded with their own feelings, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean decided on the new play of the "Wife's Secret" for their first appearance, on the 17th of January. The result proved that the selection was judicious. The reception of the returned favourites, and the success of the play, were equally enthusiastic, and no dissent was even faintly attempted. The "Wife's Secret" ran thirty-six nights with undiminished effect; the engagement, originally for thirty nights, was extended to sixty; and on the occasion of their benefit, her Majesty honoured them with her presence, conferring the distinction of a "special patronage." This was the first time during a long service of twenty years that Charles Kean had been fortunate enough to obtain an original part of any importance; but *Sir Walter Amyot* can scarcely be ranked as a first-rate character, being throughout the play subordinate to his wife, the *Lady Eveline*. Up to this period his reputation had been exclusively built on his illustrations of Shakespeare. In this respect his father and himself had been less fortunate than their predecessors. *Rolla*, the *Stranger*, *Penruddock*, and *Octavian* assisted the fame of John Kemble, nearly as much as *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Wolsey*, or *Coriolanus*. *Virginius*, *William Tell*, *Werner*, *Claude Melnotte*, and *Cardinal Richelieu*, proved more valuable stepping-stones to Macready than *King John*, *Othello*, or *Macbeth*.

At the close of 1848, Charles Kean was selected, without application on his part, to conduct the "Windsor theatricals"—a series of private performances at the Castle, adopted by the Queen and the Prince Consort, with the double object of promoting the interests of the British drama, while they gratified

their own personal inclinations. The principle proposed and carried out was, that the performers should be selected indiscriminately according to their abilities, and without reference to any particular theatre or individual interest. It was manifest to all, except the discontented minority who can find good in nothing, that this was a great step towards the restoration of fashion to the once crowded but now almost abandoned temples of dramatic worship. In this her Majesty inherited the taste of her grandfather, King George III., with whom the theatre was ever a favourite relaxation. When in the comparative retirement of Windsor and Weymouth, his usual habit was, to command twice a-week, and to go in private on the other two nights of performance. The managers made fortunes, and the actors were exalted. His Majesty and Queen Charlotte once actually travelled all night from Weymouth to London to open parliament, that they might not disappoint a favourite comic performer to whom they had promised their patronage on his benefit night, which had been unavoidably postponed. It was suggested to the kind-hearted monarch that he might send the actor a present, which would compensate for his disappointment. "No, no," replied the King, "I should do that at any rate; but poor fellow, poor fellow! he will think much more of our being there than of anything we might give him."

The compliment of being appointed her Majesty's "master of the revels" in her own private palace, was undoubtedly one of the most gratifying nature, both to the man and the actor; but the difficulties by which it was accompanied might stand by the labours of Hercules, and lose nothing in the comparison. A very general desire was manifested to appear before royalty, in royalty's select retreat; but it was no easy

matter to reconcile conflicting claims, or bring down expectations, almost invariably preposterous, to a practicable standard. That Charles Kean acquitted himself to the perfect satisfaction of his august employers, may be assumed from the facts that her Majesty presented him with a diamond ring, and accorded him the still more flattering honour of a personal interview.* To satisfy all his brethren of the sock and buskin was a much more arduous undertaking. He worked with unceasing tact, command of temper, and the most perfect impartiality; but he discovered ere long that to roll uphill the stone of Sisyphus, to draw water in the bucket of the Danaidæ, to carve Mount Athos into a statue, to dance for uninterrupted hours on the tread-mill, to be fitted to the bed of Procrustes, or to lie on the burning couch of Guatimozin, would be gentle recreation compared to the complicated, impracticable, and hopeless task which he had vainly expected to accomplish.

The object and advantages of the Royal Theatricals were well set forth in the following notice, which appeared in the *Times* of Friday, the 26th of January, 1849:—

“For the last month, the plays acted in the Rubens Room at Windsor Castle, have afforded a fertile topic of conversation to those who take interest in the proceedings of the Court, and those who discuss the fluctuating fortunes of the British drama. The fact that the Sovereign bespoke a series of English theatrical performances as a recreation in her own palace, has at least the charm of novelty to recommend it to the attention of the curious. Fancy has wandered back to the days of Elizabeth and the first James, when such means of amusement were not uncommon; and perhaps,

* On the 21st of February, 1849.

wandering forward, has augured that a new stock of dramatists worthy to compete with those of the Elizabethan era may spring into existence from the effect of the Windsor Theatricals.

“With respect to the performances just concluded, they seem to have been conducted in the very best taste, and to have given unequivocal satisfaction to the distinguished auditors. Mr. Charles Kean, under whose direction the whole has taken place, Mr. Grieve, the head of the decorative department, and the principal performers, have all received the special approbation of royalty; and there is no doubt that an entertainment adequate to the royal wishes has been provided on every occasion.

“The courtly assembly seems to have laid aside that frigidity which is usually the characteristic of private theatricals, and to have applauded with the zeal of a money-paying public, thoroughly pleased with the return for its outlay. It is a fallacy to suppose that a theatrical exhibition can go on briskly without applause. Approbation is the meat, drink, and spirit of the histrionic artist; and his professional life, without this aliment constantly bestowed, is a dreary waste without an oasis.

“With the large public—the public outside the Castle—the question *à propos* of these theatricals is, whether or not they confer a benefit on the English drama. That the benefit will not be of that immediately palpable nature which would result from half-a-dozen royal visits in state, and the crowds consequent thereupon, must, we think, be conceded by any impartial person. But at the same time we are inclined to decide that an indirect benefit to the English theatres is far from improbable.

“When the highest personage in the land considers

that an English dramatic performance is such an entertainment as to merit the construction of a stage in her own drawing-room, with all the appurtenances of a regular theatre, the opinion that the native drama is unfashionable receives an authoritative rebuke. The plays acted at Windsor Castle are the same that may be seen at the Haymarket and the Lyceum; the actors in the Rubens Room are precisely the same individuals who appear on the public boards; and it would be absurd to say that an entertainment which occupies a high rank at Windsor, loses that rank when it comes to the metropolis.

“The very circumstance that theatricals are now generally talked about, is in itself likely to be of advantage to the English drama. A certain elevated class of the public, by shunning English theatres and skipping English critiques, might soon lose sight of the native drama altogether. But now, the plays and the actors are forced upon the attention of the higher orders from another point. He who studies the proceedings of the Court, has an English theatrical programme thrust into his view; and the same course of reading which tells him that her Majesty took an airing, also informs him that Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean play *Hamlet* and *Ophelia*. The crowded state of the principal theatres would seem to indicate that an awakened interest for theatricals is already taking effect.

“That many private controversies have arisen respecting the formation of the theatrical company at Windsor Castle, we are perfectly aware. Some have considered themselves unjustly excluded; others, although admitted, have thought themselves disadvantageously placed. These controversies, which are almost infinite in number, each involving its own distinct point, are not within our province. That every one of a class should be satisfied

when a selection was to be made, was mathematically impossible. The right and wrong of each individual case is a matter of separate discussion, and much more concerns the parties themselves, than the public before the lamps.

"In conclusion, if the royal theatricals at Windsor give an impulse to the drama which proves advantageous to its professors, we hope that the exertions of Mr. Charles Kean may not be entirely forgotten."

The Windsor performances were continued annually at the Castle at the Christmas season, since the first series, interrupted only on three occasions,—in 1850, by the death of the Dowager Queen Adelaide; in 1855, in consequence of the national gloom resulting from the precarious situation of our armies in the Crimea; and in 1858, on the marriage of the Princess Royal, when they were superseded by other arrangements. Mr. C. Kean, in his capacity of Chairman at the dinner of the General Theatrical Fund, on the 21st of May, 1849, when proposing her Majesty's health, spoke as follows with reference to the advantages accruing from the royal patronage; and what he said was unanimously echoed by the assembled company:—*

"The members of the theatrical profession have ever been signalized by their devoted loyalty. You are aware that in the troubled times of Charles I., those times, according to the satiric poet,

"When hard words, jealousies, and fears
Set folks together by the ears,"

when political quarrels and puritanic frenzy closed the theatres,—nearly the whole of the actors took up arms in the cause of their royal master. Hart, Robinson, and Mohun, held commissions in the king's service, and

* See published "Proceedings of the Fourth Anniversary Festival of the General Theatrical Fund; 1849."

were remarkable for their gallant conduct. At a later period, Smith, Griffin, Carlisle, and Wiltshire, served as captains in the wars of William III.; and the two latter fell honourably on the field of battle. I recall these facts with pride and satisfaction on the present occasion. The distinguished company I have now the honour of addressing, are all deeply interested in the prosperity of the Drama. Those amongst us who are not actors, are equally well versed with ourselves in the history of the stage, and as fully impressed as we are with the difficulties that have lately impeded its progress, and somewhat obscured its brilliancy; but a star of light has arisen on the darkened horizon of our prospects, and I hope I am not too sanguine when I hail it as the harbinger of a steady and improving sunshine. I allude to the late series of performances at Windsor Castle, by command of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Albert. (Loud cheers.) We all owe a deep debt of gratitude for the honour thus conferred upon us, and for the advantages we have thereby gained. By selecting the drama for their hours of private relaxation, by introducing it into the chosen circle of their domestic privacy, by permitting the royal children, in their earliest budding youth, to become familiar with the magic verse of Shakespeare, her Majesty and her royal consort have stamped an importance and impressed a sterling value on the stage, that will be long felt and most thankfully appreciated. Covered by the protecting shield of royal favour, assisted by the powerful influence and commanding prestige of royal taste, and heralded, as I may say, by a patent of precedency, our art and its professors resume their position with increasing hopes and redoubled energy."

On the 30th of March, 1849, the widow of Edmund Kean died at Keydell, near Horndean, in Hampshire,

the country residence of her son, on a small estate he had purchased in 1844, and where she found a happy retreat during the closing years of her chequered and eventful existence. The history of the elder Mrs. Kean presents us with a moral lesson of the deepest interest, a subject for salutary reflection, and a special instance of the varied dispensations of Providence. During the early years of her married life, she struggled with many privations, and drained the cup of poverty to its bitterest dregs. Then came the episode of London success, with all its unlooked-for luxury and ruinous profusion. After that followed the unprovoked desertion of her husband, the combined evils of broken health and vanished hopes, with disease, neglect, and destitution, more pungently felt from an interval of prosperity; until finally raised again by the filial piety and untiring exertions of her son, she passed the evening of her days surrounded by all the comforts of affluence, and all the soothing cares of the fondest affection. Her remains lie in the churchyard of Catherington, a secluded hamlet, not far from Keydell, where she ended her days. The following inscription may be read upon her tomb:—

“NATIVE OF WATERFORD.

IN MEMORY OF MARY,

RELICT OF THE LATE EDMUND KEAN,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE

MARCH 30, 1849,

IN OR ABOUT THE SEVENTIETH YEAR OF HER AGE.

“Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

THIS TOMB WAS ERECTED BY HER AFFECTIONATE SON,
CHARLES JOHN KEAN.”

On the 21st of May, 1849, Charles Kean presided at the fourth anniversary dinner of the General Theatrical Fund (to which we have previously alluded). It was the first time he had ever been called on to discharge the duties of chairman at a public dinner. The situation

was difficult as well as novel, but he acquitted himself with much ability, and spoke with pathos and effect. The attendance and contributions considerably exceeded those on any of the preceding occasions. He had from the beginning been an annual contributor to this excellent institution, which well deserves the increasing support it appears to receive.

The honour of instituting theatrical funds belongs to Thomas Hull, for several years stage manager at Covent Garden, until declining strength compelled him to resign the duties of that troublesome and thankless office to Mr. Lewis. He was highly respectable both as an author and actor; in the former character more particularly, and ranks with the patriarchs of the stage, having played up to 1808, being then in his seventy-eighth year. But he has a higher claim on the consideration of all who feel an interest in the dramatic art, as being the founder of the Covent Garden Fund for the support of decayed actors, the oldest establishment of the kind in the kingdom, which has given comfort to many who during their best years contributed to the solace and amusement of others, and has cheered the desolateness of old age with the certainty of an adequate subsistence. Too much honour cannot be paid to those who have been the means of carrying into effect such permanent benevolence. The case of Mrs. Hamilton, in 1762, who had filled a position of importance at Covent Garden, but then reduced to such distress as to depend entirely on the contributions of her professional fraternity, alarmed the whole body of actors. Hull was the first who conceived and brought to bear a rational project for a substantial remedy against this evil to which all were exposed. To promote the common end, he addressed the performers of Covent Garden in a printed circular, in which, after showing

the necessity of some mode of provision, he stated several reasonable propositions as the foundation of his plan. Sixpence in the pound was named as a weekly subscription out of the respective salaries. His address produced an immediate effect; a collection was set forward at once, under the joint efforts of himself and Mattocks, who became also a strenuous promoter of the scheme. They were most liberally assisted by the patronage of Beard and Rich, the then proprietors of Covent Garden. Gibson, an actor of that theatre, was, at his death, a large contributor, dividing his accumulated savings of 8000*l.* between the fund and the poor of Liverpool, where he was buried, and had for many years managed a summer theatre. Cumberland and Mrs. Donaldson were likewise liberal benefactors. During the first six years, or thereabouts, the fund received considerable augmentation by the profits of annual benefits; but under the elder Colman's management, these benefits were stopped, and never afterwards regularly resumed. To them succeeded dinners, at which the chair was generally filled by a member of the royal family, or a nobleman of the highest rank. At these charitable festivities, the collections frequently exceeded 1,000*l.* The fund grew rapidly, and in 1776, received the sanction of an Act of Parliament, the subscribers being thereby declared a body corporate.

The Covent Garden Fund was first proposed while Garrick was travelling on the Continent, with the double object of recruiting his health, and of stimulating by absence, his somewhat ebbing attraction. The "Box book fever," as it is technically called, was supposed to be his principal complaint. It is a well-known fact, attested by the books, that, before his departure, he played his most popular parts to receipts falling under

20l. On one occasion, although supported by Mr. Cibber, to less than 5l. This may appear incredible, but it is nevertheless true. Those "palmy days" of the drama were not all to be marked by a white stone.

On Garrick's return home, he felt exceedingly angry and mortified that a movement of such importance as the establishment of a fund should have been carried on without the least communication with him, who, as the head of his profession, and as manager and joint patentee of Drury Lane, might reasonably have expected to have been consulted. But out of evil came good, and two charitable institutions were created instead of one. Garrick, naturally benevolent, was easily pacified by the excuses which were made to appease him, and with his partner Lacy, in 1766, very heartily concurred to set on foot a similar fund at Drury Lane. They were unanimously seconded by their company, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Yates,* who were not ashamed to assign the selfish, short-sighted reason for non-cooperation, that they should never want its assistance! The Drury Lane managers contributed a large sum at the first onset, and gave an annual benefit for the new fund while the patent remained in their hands. On these occasions, Garrick rendered essential service by acting himself. In January, 1776, he paid the expenses of an Act of Parliament, for the legal estab-

* Mrs. Yates was the immediate predecessor of Mrs. Siddons, and by some ardent admirers supposed to exceed her in certain characters. Yates, her husband, stood high as a comedian; but he had a defective memory, for which he fell under the lash of Churchill. He lived up to ninety, and may be included in the list of eccentrics who have jested when dying. The day before his decease, he complained to a friend that he had been extremely ill-used by the managers of Drury Lane, who denied him an *order*! "That was unkind indeed to an old servant," rejoined the friend. "Yes," replied the dying comedian, "particularly when my admission could have kept no *living* soul out of the house; for only requested an order to be *buried* under the centre of the stage and they were hard-hearted enough to refuse me."

lishment (as at the rival house), and it has been computed, that by various donations and bequests, as well as by performing annually capital parts, he personally gained to this institution near 4,500*l*. The proceeds of his last appearance, on the 10th of June, 1776, were handed over to it without deduction. But the funds of Drury Lane and Covent Garden are subject to many restrictions, and hemmed in by difficulties, arising from the misfortunes which have fallen on what were once the two great national theatres. No one could be a member or a claimant unless he or she had served a given number of seasons in companies which no longer existed. The stock increases, but those who alone can demand its relief are rapidly verging to extinction. These and other considerations have led to the establishment of a "General Theatrical Fund," open to every member of the profession throughout the empire, who chooses to become a subscriber, and fulfils the regulations of this noble institution, which sprang into existence in 1839. Her most gracious Majesty is the Patroness, and annually contributes 100*l*.

The theatrical funds reflect great and lasting credit on the actors with whom they originated. Every true lover of the drama must say of such laudable undertakings (and of similar ones in the provincial theatres), may they flourish in perpetuity, and may the shadows of their founders increase. Formerly, the managers of the funds sought for a name of high rank and aristocratic influence to fill the chair at their anniversary dinners. With the latest institution of the three, the gift of oratory has been held in higher estimation. They judged that their cause would be better advanced by a *rex convivii* who could plead while he presided, and could touch the feelings while he aimed at the pockets of the company. With this object they have sought for such presidents as Charles Dickens, Sir E.

Lytton Bulwer, Macready, Charles Kean, Webster, Buckstone, and Phelps.

On the fourth annual meeting, Charles Kean detailed the purposes and condition of the fund, at full length, as we find in the following published report of the proceedings on that day:—

“GENTLEMEN,—In the order of toasts as I am instructed to propose them, I now arrive at that which brings immediately before us the object of the present meeting. The cause entrusted to my feeble advocacy is one so interesting in itself, so all-important to the numerous parties whose welfare it embraces, appealing so exclusively to the kindest feelings of our nature and at the same time so dependent on the power or weakness of its intercessor, that I shrink embarrassed under the consciousness of my own inability. (Cheers. I feel myself unequal to the task of carrying up this noble argument to its full vindication, and regret that it has not devolved on one (and such could easily have been found) more experienced in the duties of a chairman,—on one less accustomed to repeat exclusively the thoughts of others,—on one more gifted with the grace of speech, and endowed with that captivating eloquence which enchains the reason, wins the heart, and controls the sympathies. (Loud cheers.) I stand before you as the advocate of Christian charity, of simple, pure benevolence; as counsel for the old, the indigent, and helpless members of our profession. Your own generous feelings will supply my deficiencies, and plead for my clients more gracefully and effectually than any effort of mine, even though I were inspired for the occasion as I would I were, with a power of utterance—

“Great and commanding as the breath of kings,
Sweet as the poet's numbers, and prevailing
As soft persuasion.”

(Cheers.)

“ At the three annual festivals which have preceded this, the origin, nature, and object of this institution have been amply detailed. Its peculiar and most valuable feature of universal association—(cheers)—unrestricted by age or special service in any particular establishment, has been already explained by the gifted gentlemen who presided on those occasions. (Loud cheers.) In the absence of Mr. Buckstone (the honorary treasurer), who is unavoidably detained at the Haymarket Theatre, the present condition and prospects of the fund will be laid before you by your zealous secretary, Mr. Cullenford. (Cheers.) I will not intrude on his province further than by remarking, which I do with earnest satisfaction, that his statement will show you the progress is steady, and the prospect cheering. But there are still two or three leading points, not connected with these details, to which I will venture to call your attention for a few passing moments ; and, if I can put forth a single plea in aid of those already pressed upon your notice, or, if I can excite an additional throb of sympathy in a single bosom, the time will not be wholly consumed in vain, and you will pardon the tediousness I inflict on you, for the motive by which it has been occasioned. (Cheers.)

“ The advantages of a national drama, its influence on the civilisation, the morals, the manners, the habits, and, I may say, the happiness of men, is so generally felt and admitted, save by those whose minds are clouded by the mists of prejudice—and with such we deal not—(cheers)—that I may be allowed to look upon and name it as a proved fact and admitted principle. Looking, therefore, to the means of upholding and invigorating this valuable institution, I hail the establishment of a General Theatrical Fund, open alike to the members of every theatre, and the professors of every branch of this most complicated art, as a valuable auxiliary, a

steady prop, a solid buttress of support; giving to and deriving from the parent edifice an increase of strength and power, elevating both art and artist in the scale of respectability, and affording to the latter a haven of refuge when age and infirmities admonish him that—

“ Time steals on, and higher duties crave
Some space between the theatre and grave.”

“ The present position of the two great houses of Covent Garden and Drury Lane—those splendid structures so long and fondly designated as the legitimate temples of Shakespeare and the British Drama, so associated with all that is grand, and classical, and ennobling in the art, so inseparably connected with the brightest names that shed lustre on its annals; the strange uses to which they are perverted;* the long and apparently interminable eclipse by which they are obscured—these circumstances engender feelings of regret in all, and despondency in many. (Cheers.) In the regret I cordially participate, but I am not amongst the despondent. (Loud cheers.) The prospects of the drama may be darkened by a passing cloud, but I cannot feel that they are extinguished, even though the great houses should never again resume their ancient ascendancy. (Cheers.) The tide of fashion, ever varying in its capricious course, may run for a season too strongly in favour of the exotic ballet, the gorgeous spectacle, or the imported opera; but Shakespeare still maintains his hold on the hearts of his countrymen, and will stand pre-eminent on his time-honoured pedestal as long as truth and nature hold their sway, and men can feel the power of language and the grace of action. (Enthusiastic cheers.) I hope, and think, that good days are in store for us, and, as the

* The one, at that time, was an Italian Opera House; the other, an arena for equestrian exercises.

number of actors will increase with the increasing prosperity of the stage, so will the necessity and advantage of a well established and liberally endowed general theatrical fund impress itself forcibly on all convictions. I trust we shall make a giant's stride to-day in advance of our object. (Cheers.) The report of our proceedings, the augmentation of the invested property, the amount of our collection here, will give an impulse to opinion without, draw to us the support of strangers, and the favour of the general public. I trust, by steady perseverance, to see this comparatively private effort expand into a national institution. (Cheers.)

"In the long struggle of professional life, and more particularly in the actor's life, distinction and independence are achieved only by the fortunate few, while the laborious but deserving many toil on in the ranks, earning with difficulty a subsistence for the present, and utterly unable to lay by any provision for the future. (Cheers.) Let it not be said that the disciples of Thespis are universally thoughtless and improvident. There are many who have never had the opportunity of laying in store. Amongst the intellectual avocations, ours has attached to it some melancholy peculiarities. Brilliant and captivating as the actor's triumphs may appear, they are as perishing as the applause by which they are accompanied. The poet, the painter, and the sculptor leave behind them lasting memorials of their creative genius, in the living page, the glowing canvas, and the enduring marble. The actor's brightest achievement dies with himself, or survives but in the fading records of imperfect tradition. (Loud cheers.) By ceaseless study and long experience only can he hope to master the difficulties of his art; and before his mental faculties have attained their full meridian, his physical powers are on the decline, and warn him that he can no

longer execute his own conceptions. He must leave the field to younger candidates, and retire into solitude and oblivion ; too often with but little to console him in the remembrance of the past, no comfort in the privations of the present, and scarcely a ray of hope from the darkness of the future. (Cheers.) A great moralist, Dr. Johnson, tells us, and truly, that " Youth is the season of enjoyment ; the utmost that age can look for is ease." Aye, gentlemen—but let us contemplate age without ease—age with its natural accompaniments of disease and pain, and decaying faculties ; age without the affectionate hand to smoothe the pillow or the consoling voice to assuage the anguish ; age, bowed down by penury and indigence, with cultivated mind, polished manners, and habits of refinement, linked to squalid beggary, racked by the agonizing doubt that the scanty pittance of to-day may cease to be forthcoming to-morrow—(hear, hear)—aye, that even the dismantled garret may not yet be exchanged for the still more loathsome poor-house. (Cheers.) This, though a harrowing picture, is no creation of the fancy, but a stern reality, too often exemplified in the fate of the superannuated actor, whose only refuge from such complicated misery is a nameless grave.

" Let us endeavour to reverse the gloomy picture. Be it our task to step in between our aged brethren and their prostrate helplessness ; to restore hope to the despairing heart ; to substitute contentment for repining, and competence for destitution. (Cheers.) To effect this, we must press forward the growth of this fund with active zeal and untiring energy. Let us set an example of liberality in our own contributions to foster and enkindle liberality in others. (Cheers.) In such a cause the smallest offering has its full weight and value. Individual efforts, though weak in themselves, produce collective strength, and as the union of labour speedily

raises a stately edifice, so the combination of many small sums soon amasses a mighty capital. This institution may yet be considered in its infancy, and already there are five annuitants dependent on its resources and secured from want. Like the disbanded soldier on his pension, they rest from toil in humble but honourable retirement. (Loud cheers.) There are many more hands extended to us in supplication, many other voices sounding plaintively in our ears. They have powerful claims and we are bound to entertain them. Whatever may be the faults and professional jealousies of actors, (and from what profession or what pursuit in life are jealousies excluded?)—(hear, hear)—they are ever found ready to assist their poorer brethren. (Cheers.) Those who are now dependent, while they had means themselves, and the appeal was made, gave cheerfully. In their own hour of need let us remember this, and cheerfully requite them. (Cheers.) We cannot, it is true, bring back the manly vigour or restore the faded loveliness; we cannot check the unsparing scythe of time, call up again the form that delighted the eye, the voice that charmed the ear, or the thrilling energy that commanded the applause—(cheers);—but we *can* make glad the spirits that are now depressed in sorrow; we can repay them something for the many hours of recreation that soften the corroding cares of life; we can give peace and calm repose where there is doubt, and gloom, and poverty; we can cause the flush of joy once again to mantle on the pale cheek from which it appeared to be for ever banished. Above all, let us remember that in thus establishing an asylum for the worn out members of the stage, we advance the importance of the stage itself—(cheers);—and while we advocate the purest doctrine of Christian charity, we give new strength and value to the noble science we study to illustrate, and

which the poet of Hope thus beautifully eulogises in reference to one of its most stately ornaments :

‘ His* was the spell o’er hearts
Which only Acting lends ;
The youngest of the sister arts,
Where all their beauty blends.
For ill can Poetry express
Full many a tone of thought sublime ;
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Steals but a glance from time.
But by the mighty Actor brought,
Illusion’s perfect triumphs come ;
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculpture to be dumb ! ’ ”

During the seasons of 1848-9, and 1849-50, Charles Kean departed from the plan he had hitherto adopted in his London engagements of making occasional visits at stated intervals only, and accepted a permanent situation with Mr. Webster at the Haymarket Theatre. In this determination he was principally influenced by family considerations ; the declining health of his mother, which made him unwilling to leave her for any lengthened period, and a desire to superintend the early education of his daughter and only child, then in her sixth and seventh years. At the commencement of 1849, “ Othello ” was brought forward, when Charles Kean personated the *Moor* and *Iago*, alternately with James Wallack ; Creswick being *Cassio*, Wigan, *Roderigo*, Mrs. C. Kean, *Emilia*, and Miss Laura Addison, *Desdemona*. On the 20th of June, during the same season, Mr. Westland Marston’s “ Strathmore ” was performed : a play abounding in poetic beauty and worked up at the close with intense interest and effect ; in our humble opinion, by far the best acting drama which the talented writer has yet produced. The London attraction of “ Strathmore,” was somewhat weakened by the lateness of the season and the extreme heat of the weather. In

John Kemble.

Dublin and Cork it met with deserved success. Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were again, in this instance, fortunate in original parts of great power and passion, in which they carried out to full reality the author's conception, and added materially to their own established fame. In March, 1850, they concluded their engagements at the Haymarket. On the occasion of their last benefit, the Queen a second time honoured them with her presence and special patronage. The play selected was "Much Ado about Nothing;" they appeared as *Benedick* and *Beatrice*, characters in which they had won much reputation throughout the season.

On the 12th of July, 1850, the veteran mother of the stage, Mrs. Glover, took her farewell benefit at Drury Lane, under the patronage of her Majesty. The bill consisted of the "Rivals," with the farces of "Delicate Ground" and "Friend Wraggles," supported in all the principal parts by volunteer members of the leading theatres. William Farren and Madame Vestris were prominent in the list. The time-worn actress had been confined to her bed for a fortnight previous to the appointed time, and considerable apprehensions existed that she would be unable to present herself on this the closing, as also the most interesting scene in her long professional life. But strong determination can sometimes obtain a momentary victory over physical weakness, and so it proved on the present memorable occasion. She repaired to the theatre, went through the part of *Mrs. Malaprop*, with debility visibly increasing at every moment, but was unable to utter the few words of farewell which had been announced to the public. When the curtain rose again, after the conclusion of the comedy, Mrs. Glover was discovered seated in a chair surrounded by her professional brethren and sisters. She bowed to the crowded audience in silent but expressive acknowledgment, and was carried from the theatre to the bed

from whence she rose no more in life. On Tuesday, the 16th of July, her death was announced, and within one short week from her last appearance in public, a grave in the churchyard of St. George's, Bloomsbury, covered her remains. It was a sudden close to a long career.

In early life, Mrs. Glover was eminent for personal beauty, both in face and figure; but as the latter expanded into rotundity with advancing time, she relinquished the juvenile heroines before her personal attributes unfitted her to represent them. She had not the idle vanity of wishing to retain *Juliet* for forty years, but subsided in due course into the *Nurse*, with the *Mrs. Heidelbergs*, *Candours*, and *Malaprops*. Histrionic ladies in general fall into a great mistake, from a natural disinclination to adopt the old women, until they are actually old. There is no line on the stage that requires more vigour than the simulation of the passions and humours of age.

Mrs. Glover, when she died, was in her seventy second year, having been born at Newry, in Ireland, on the 8th of January, 1779. She had been fifty-three years a London actress. Her first appearance at Covent Garden took place on the 12th of October, 1797. She was then Miss Julia Betterton, and scarcely in the first bloom of womanhood. Her selected trial part was *Ethwina*, in Hannah More's long-interred tragedy of "Percy;" of which Hazlitt says, on its second exhumation twenty-eight years later, "we never can forgive Hannah More for making us feel that Miss O'Neil could be tedious."

The authoress of this same "Percy" composed two other tragedies, "Fatal Falsehood," and the "Inflexible Captive." In her youth she was an enthusiastic admirer of Garrick, and a constant visitor at his house. As she progressed in life she became serious and thoughtful, and her early opinions changed. She convince

herself that the stage was an irreligious business in its very essence, and wrote an essay to that effect, which she prefixed to a republication of her tragedies. She was sincere, no doubt, according to her convictions; but to have been consistent, and to have obtained weight for her arguments, she should have put forth the essay alone, and withdrawn the tragedies. A little of the vanity of authorship prevailed, and she was thus driven to maintain that a play might be a lawful recreation in the closet, but a very criminal indulgence when acted; a refinement of casuistry scarcely intelligible, and which amounts to saying that things are not to be applied to the purposes for which they are intended. If anything, no matter what, is good in itself, that which sets forth its qualities in the strongest light is *best*. If it be bad, away with it altogether, as equally unfit to *see* or *read*. All professed writers against the stage endeavour to set up general rules, founded, however, on exceptive cases. But if we test these rules by general application,—and there is no other way of proving their value fairly,—we shall find that, from the beginning to the end, from Stephen Gosson, Prynne, and Collier, down to Hannah More, Styles, Best of Sheffield, and Close of Carlisle, inclusive, they are based on fallacy.

A Roman satirist says, "*Totus mundus exerceat histrionem.*"* Everybody follows the trade of acting; or, as Shakespeare more beautifully amplifies the thought,—

"All the world's a stage.

And all the men and women, merely players."

This sentence, forming, perhaps, the truest and most comprehensive apology for the theatre, suggests the following paraphrase:—

"Oh, Inconsistency, all mankind are thy disciples!"

* Tit. Petron. Arb. Satyræ, p. 521.—Ed. 1669. These words were affixed as a motto to the Globe Theatre in Shakespeare's time.

When Miss Betterton adopted the stage as her profession, she found in the Covent Garden company, acting with her from night to night, as models to study from, Mrs. Crawford, Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Litchfield, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Mattocks, and Mrs. Martyr. Where, in the present day, could a young beginner look for such a galaxy of talent, on which to found an incipient style? In a school like that, if there was ability, excellence was sure to be achieved. When the rising actress had scarcely entered on her twentieth year, the control of a tyrannical father compelled her to a distasteful marriage, and she became Mrs. Glover, under which name, for half a century, she won and maintained her high position in the estimation of the public. For many years she had to struggle with domestic difficulties, arising from the extravagance and persecution of a neglectful husband, the maintenance of a numerous family, and the support of a parent who had not discharged his duties as faithfully as she performed hers by supporting him in aged destitution.

Assuredly, Mrs. Glover has left no duplicate behind her; no, not even the shadow of a double, amongst her still-living contemporaries. That any of her most renowned predecessors, including Miss Pope and Mrs. Mattocks, excelled her, we may reasonably doubt. Her acting, in her peculiar line, was perfection. The most prominent features were, a nice discrimination of character, a rich vein of comic humour, more in the domestic than in the refined or romantic cast, joined to a constitutional buoyancy and energy which suffered no diminution under the inroads of time.

END OF VOL. I.

THE
LIFE AND THEATRICAL TIMES

OF

CHARLES KEAN, F.S.A.

INCLUDING A SUMMARY OF

THE ENGLISH STAGE FOR THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.

BY JOHN WILLIAM COLE.

“Orator ad vos venio ornatu prologi :

Sinite exorator ut sim.—

Quia sciebam dubiam fortunam esse scenicam,

Spe incerta certum mihi laborem sustuli.”—TERENTIUS HECYRA.

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THE
LIFE AND THEATRICAL TIMES
OF
CHARLES KEAN, F.S.A.

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CHARLES KEAN ENTERS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MR. KEELEY—'TWELFTH NIGHT' THE OPENING PLAY—THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851—ITS SUCCESS AND OBJECTS—LONDON INUNDATED WITH FOREIGNERS—OPINION OF THE FRENCH ON ENGLISH CHARACTER AND HABITS—DISTINCTION BETWEEN FRENCH AND ENGLISH DRAMATISTS—THE THEATRES CROWDED NIGHTLY THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER—COMPANY ENGAGED AT THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE—OLD PIECES REVIVED—NEW PIECES PRODUCED—'THE GAMSTER' ON MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN'S BENEFIT NIGHT—REMARKS ON THE MORAL TENDENCY OF THE PLAY AND THE LESSON IT INCULCATES—CONCLUSION OF THE SEASON—ITS GREAT SUCCESS—RETIREMENT OF R. MACREADY—HIS FAREWELL BENEFIT AND PARTING ADDRESS AT RURY LANE—SHORT SUMMARY OF HIS CAREER—THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIM IN AMERICA.

In August, 1850, Charles Kean, in partnership with M. Keeley, entered on a lease for two years, of the Princess's Theatre, in Oxford Street, and for the first time embarked on the "stormy sea" of management. The Keans and the Keeleys formed a rich coalition of

diversified talent. The progressive events of their experiment were watched with unusual interest, howbeit they had fallen on evil days, and their net was cast in troubled waters. Much was wanting to revive public taste and restore the stage, generally supposed to be on the decline, to its former elevation. Mr. Phelps had already raised the standard of legitimacy at Sadler's Wells, and was making a manly stand; but his scene of action was far east, and too much circumscribed by its locality to divert into unwonted channels the antagonistic tide of fashion. It was felt by all the ardent partisans of our national drama, that unless some compelling force could be applied to counterbalance the thousand and one causes which pressed heavily on its vitality, the most intellectual of all recreations stood in danger of being numbered with the things that were and the art and its professors might calculate the hour when both should lie down peaceably together, inscribing over their common sepulchre—"Fuimus Troes, fuimus Ilium, et ingens gloria Teucrorum."

Many of Charles Kean's friends trembled when they saw that he had determined to risk in the uncertain issue of managerial speculation the fame and fortune which he had toiled to establish by persevering industry from youth to mature manhood. But a favouring pre-sentiment accompanied his name, with a strong impression that the star of his destiny, hitherto so bright would still continue in the ascendant. He had many and high qualifications for his new work, backed by sound experience. Much reliance was placed on his acknowledged abilities, joined with those of his accomplished lady, their estimation in general society, and irreproachable characters. His known liberality too his dealings with authors was expected to give impetus to theatrical literature. He had already pa-

a second 400*l.* to the author of the "Wife's Secret," for another play, and was in treaty with several of the leading English dramatists to employ their pens in a similar task. If the genius of Sheridan Knowles slumbered on its laurels and could not be awakened, there were younger disciples of the same school who might aspire to fill his vacant place. In addition to these and other prospects on the favourable side, Charles Kean and his clever coadjutor were backed by a potent ally—capital; without which reserve, talent and resolution have often been swallowed up and exhausted in the sacrifices necessary to ensure victory. What Montecuculi said of war is quite as applicable to theatrical management. The three most essential ingredients of success are money, money, money!

The first season under the new dynasty, at the Princess's, commenced on the 28th of September, 1850, and occupied an uninterrupted period of nearly thirteen months; terminating on the 17th of October, 1851, with the opening play of "Twelfth Night." The net profit amounted to 7,000*l.*; but it was the year of the Exhibition, in Hyde Park, and the result cannot be taken as forming any ground for an average calculation.

The Great Exhibition of 1851, might well be called the world's wonder, for such in truth it was. The most perfect realization of a magnificent idea that ever entered the mind of man. The scheme of Henri Quatre for a general peace coalition throughout Europe was scarcely more sublime, and evidently not so practicable. The treasures that were brought together in the Crystal Palace, Hyde Park, exceeded all that imagination could have anticipated. No such collection can ever be accumulated again, although the shell that contained it has been surpassed in architectural elegance by its more elaborate successor at Sydenham. By crossing from

one department to another, you were as completely in the country designated, as if the carpet of Prince Houssein had actually annihilated time and space, and carried you there in a minute. You heard its language, saw the complexion of its people, and investigated its productions. The whole formed a scene of living enchantment, an animated cosmorama, to lose yourself in for a month, without weariness, and to think of for ever after.

A calculation computed on police returns, estimated the number of visitors to the Crystal Palace, during the six months that it remained open, at seven millions. The total receipt of money considerably exceeded half a million sterling, leaving an available balance of 240,000*l*. The only way of seeing the Exhibition thoroughly and with comfort, was by a season-ticket, of which, as a matter of course, none but residents could avail themselves. You thus took your time, divided your visit into sections, and examined everything in succession. To-day you were in France, to-morrow in Austria, the day following in Italy, and the next week in India. You then crossed an imaginary Atlantic and glanced over Canada and the United States.

On this plan it required three months, at the rate of several hours per diem, to become acquainted with all the marvels that were submitted to view. A country family arriving by an excursion train, with a return ticket, good for a week, and sometimes only for three days, could obtain little better than a bird's-eye glance galloping along, catalogue in hand (as Sir Francis Head scoured the Pampas), reeking with perspiration, and resolved as a point of principle as well as of value received, to toil regularly through the official list of twenty thousand articles.

The predictions of the alarmists were verified to th

etter during the summer of 1851. London for several months was occupied by the French, but quite in a family way, and without disturbing the *entente cordiale*. An Englishman wonders how our continental friends contrive to live in so expensive a city as London, knowing that they are not usually endowed with a superfluity of the circulating medium. But there they were, and appeared to enjoy themselves amazingly. You met two foreigners, as you perambulated the streets, for one indigenous child of the soil. They were less mystified by the wonders of the Exhibition than by the total absence of soldiers, the order and peaceable demeanour of the vast multitudes that thronged the thoroughfares, and the perfect ease with which a few hundred policemen managed everything, without any apparent effort. These points of home discipline are utterly incomprehensible to strangers, who are accustomed to behold in every capital of Europe a vast entrenched camp, bristling with bayonets and artillery,—a powder magazine ready to explode with the slightest ignition. They saw Queen Victoria go into the heart of the city, to the Lord Mayor's *fête*, and return through countless thousands in the middle of the night, with a simple escort of honour. They saw her pass in all the paraphernalia of regal state to prorogue the two houses of Parliament, still only with a few policemen to keep the passage clear, while all London stood in respectful attendance, cheering and saluting with unaffected loyalty. Here were evidences of a firmly-based monarchy, a paternal government, a nation satisfied with their institutions, and their power of maintaining them, more convincing than a triple line of fortifications, and a bivouac of troops in every square.

The great London Exhibition, which has been followed by many imitations, was not only the best, but

had the advantage of being the first. Amongst the remarkable features which distinguished this mighty gathering of the nations, may be noticed the little trouble the police had in keeping order, and the small amount of robbery.

But where were the croakers who prophesied failure, and the constitutional opposers of everything, who thought ("the wish was father to the thought") the building would be gutted by a simultaneous rising of all the socialists, chartists, and red republicans in the world, expressly engaged and congregated for that particular performance?

The impression left on the mind after each successive visit to the Crystal Palace, was one of unqualified admiration, mingled with gratitude to the presiding Providence which crowned this great undertaking with such brilliant success. The blessing which was invoked by the greatest of earthly sovereigns on the inaugural day had been signally vouchsafed. The six months which followed were pregnant with instruction. All was harmony, peace, and good-will. A mantle of protection appeared to be thrown round the vast edifice, from the first opening of its doors. All felt they were entering on a scene devoted exclusively to instructive recreation, where evil passions had no field for their exercise. There was a universal impression that permanent advantages would result, irrespective of the vast additional sums of money that had been brought into circulation, and the many thousands who were thereby enabled to obtain employment. It was estimated that, during the summer of 1851, the average population of London had increased to the amount of 300,000 souls. An intercourse sprang up which had no previous existence. Foreigners, instead of vague surmises, acquired more positive knowledge of us, our habits, institutions, resources.

and peculiarities, from ocular observation, in that short period of six months, than in the thirty-six years which had previously elapsed since the gates of the Continent were opened on the fall of Napoleon. We had gone amongst them, but they had come sparingly to us. Many prejudices have been abandoned, and many mistaken views have given way, which are not likely again to obtain influence. Our foreign friends have seen and learned that there are better avenues to public prosperity than annual revolutions erected on barricades, and that a government and constitution may be firmly established without a garrison of a hundred thousand men in the capital to compel obedience. The exhibition of the produce of all countries was an honest peace-offering from England to the whole world—a cordial proclamation of amity, unaccompanied by protocols or remonstrances. When the collection began to be dispersed, there ensued much discussion as to the preservation of the building. With many reasons for the retention of Sir Joseph Paxton's magnificent structure, the arguments in favour of its removal prevailed. It may be considered fortunate that they did. Any other course would have been an error. It was erected as a temporary depository for an express purpose, which had been gloriously accomplished, and under the implied condition of being pulled down within a given period.

The whole was a great national event; an epoch in history; a period to date from in the chronology of future annalists. "I was in the great battle under the walls of Moscow!" This," said Napoleon to his veterans in the morning of Borodino, "will be your proudest recollection when reposing from the toils of service." And often shall we, in the garrulity of old age, repeat to our grandchildren, "I was in London at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and will tell you of all the marvels

I saw there." The enormous mass of all that the intellect and ingenuity of man could produce of rare and valuable; the discoveries of industry, the triumphs of art, the improvements of scientific invention, brought together with such cost and labour from the remotest corners of the earth, and arranged with such unparalleled skill, have long been scattered abroad, and have passed into the hands of different purchasers, never to be collected again. The daily recurring thousands, whose presence gave life and animated interest to the glowing scene, have subsided back into the sober, plodding tenor of ordinary avocation. The equipages of the royal, the noble, and the refined, no longer throng the surrounding avenues. The ceaseless sound of many voices, the strange blending of many foreign languages, have long been succeeded by unbroken silence. What would have been gained had the building still occupied the vast area, an untenanted monument, an empty reminiscence, a casket stripped of the treasures it was constructed to enclose? The historic records, the practical influence on civilization, the increase of commercial intercourse, are more enduring and more satisfactory memorials of the mighty bazaar, than the Crystal Palace transformed into a winter garden, or a gigantic hippodrome. Devoted to such purposes as these (which were the most favourite propositions for its conversion), it might have been useful and ornamental, but would have ceased to be a connecting link with the object which called it into existence. It would have resembled the funereal pyramid of Cheops, without the ashes of the founder; the mausoleum without the relics of the hero it was intended to preserve; or the mere outward case of the watch, divested of its costly and complicated machinery. Better that all should be removed, than that a mutilated skeleton should be retained. There may be something of barbarism,

but there was grandeur in the obsequies of Alaric, the conquering Ostrogoth. His devoted followers, by the labour of their prisoners, forcibly diverted the course of the Busentinus, near Consentia, erected his sepulchre in the empty bed of the river, piled over his mortal remains the accumulated treasures and memorials of many conquered nations, including those of Imperial Rome; and then turned on the stream again to ingulf the monarch and his trophies, that no vestige of either might remain as tangible evidences, after the soul which gave them reality, and power, and substance, had been summoned back to its account. The immortality of the Exhibition was not dependent on the mutation or breaking up of the building in which it had been contained. It rested with the historian, the painter, the engraver, and the consequences to be transmitted through succeeding generations.

Foreign visitors are invariably struck with the extent and enormous population of London; with the building mania that extends on every side, and seems likely to continue until the whole county of Middlesex is covered with brick. But a general impression seems to exist, more especially amongst the French, that England altogether, without reference to climate, is *un pays triste*—a dull country to live in. A Parisian carries the same gay indifference to the “Bourse” with which he enlivens the drawing-rooms and coffee-houses. John Bull cannot do this. With him, the Stock Exchange is the serious business of his life. He has no idea of mixing up a laugh, or a trifling anecdote, with monetary calculations. But his mistake is, that he cannot leave his commercial face at home when he mingles in society, or locked up in the desk with his scrip and debentures. He enjoys himself with an effort; and whether he is dancing, playing cards, or enduring music, appears very much as if he was thinking of something else. If you tell him a

joke, he laughs at the end as a matter of duty and politeness, but seldom looks as if he were listening. He has, usually, what the French call *l'air préoccupé*, and which they consider, not without cause, the very antipodes of relaxation. He cannot give himself up, heart and soul, as they do, to the influence of the moment. This is one leading reason why our national drama—which is always, to a certain extent, a reflex of national character—with more nerve and vigour, has far less ease, variety, and piquancy than that of our volatile neighbours. It is not that our writers are deficient in sparkling wit or broad humour. The comedies of Congreve, Farquhar, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Colman, Morton, and various living authors, attest the contrary ; but their telling points are mostly got up for the occasion, and worked off with labour ; as professed diners-out prime themselves with their best stories for public display, when they appear all fun and sparkle. But if you catch them at home in undress, they have a look of habitual melancholy, while their gibes and mockeries are as threadbare as their dressing-gowns. In fact, we often assume gaiety without any feeling of mirth ; while the French laugh constitutionally at the most solemn matters, as forming a portion of what they please to consider the burlesque of life. Let us be content to keep our gravity, coupled with the national reproach of heaviness, rather than run into the opposite extreme.

During the summer of 1851, there were nineteen theatres open in London, exclusive of the two Italian operas and the St. James's, devoted entirely to French tragedy and comedy. This list applies to quasi-legitimates only, and has no reference to hippodromes, gardens, casinos, Grecian saloons, and the thousand and one irregulars which swarmed in every corner of the city and suburbs, and where dramatic performances,

under some form or other, were represented daily and nightly. Nearly all reaped an abundant harvest, principally gathered in from the visitors and foreign strangers; although throughout the month of May there was an alarm of failure, and managerial faces elongated in proportion. But the panic was momentary, and from June onwards a reactionary tide set in, which never ebbed again, but filled the theatrical treasuries, with two or three exceptions, even to overflowing.

In *Fraser's Magazine* for August, 1851 (No. 260), it was stated that the theatres were empty, that the managers had proved themselves bad calculators in expecting they would be filled; that our dramas were not formed on the models suited to the taste of continental audiences; and that the Exhibition afforded reason enough for "a beggarly account of empty boxes," as neither foreigner nor native could sit out a play on a hot evening after a long day devoted to the wonders of the Crystal Palace.

While this was elaborately set forth for the edification of country readers, nightly facts obtruded themselves in direct refutation. All the theatres were so crowded that it was difficult to obtain squeezing room. More than half the plays exhibited mere adaptations or translations from the French; while at least five-sixths of the audiences were composed of foreigners and holiday excursionists from the country. That the same pieces were repeated night after night with little thought of variety, was a tolerable proof of continued attraction, and also that the attraction rested with the strangers. The resident play-goers were compulsively banished by the "hundred and fifty-fourth night of the 'Alhambra,'" the "two hundred and twenty-third of 'King Charming,'" and the "three hundred and thirty-first of 'Green Bushes.'"

The company collected for the opening of the

Princess's Theatre, in Sept. 1850, included the following names: Messrs. C. Kean, Keeley, Harley, Bartley, Wigan, Meadows, Ryder, Fisher, King, Bolton, Cathcart, Addison, Flexmore; Mesdames, C. Kean, Keeley, Winstanley, Wigan, Daly; Mesdemoiselles, Phillips, C. Leclercq, Robertson, Murray, M. Keeley, and Desborough. During the first season, the Shakespearean plays represented were as follows:—"Hamlet," fourteen times; "Twelfth Night," forty; "As You Like It," four; the "Merchant of Venice," twelve; and "Henry the Fourth" (Part I.), twenty-two. The "Wife's Secret," commanded twenty-six repetitions; the "Gamester," fourteen; the "Prisoner of War," thirteen; the "Stranger," seven; and "Town and Country," four. The principal novelties were, the "Templar," and the "Duke's Wager," by Mr. Slous; "Love in a Maze," by Mr. Bourcicault; and a romantic drama in the melo-dramatic line, of a very peculiar character, skilfully adapted from the French, by Mr. John Oxenford, entitled "Pauline." In the latter, the powerful acting of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean, in two well contrasted original parts, elicited universal approbation. The situations in this drama are dangerous and revolting. Nothing but the most artistic delineation, regulated by good taste, could have rendered them endurable to any English audience. There were also six light farces, namely, "Platonic Attachments," "A Model of a Wife," "Sent to the Tower," "Betsy Baker," "To Parents and Guardians," and "Apartments to Let;" with the pantomime of "Alonzo the Brave," by Mr. Fitzball, and the burlesque spectacle of the "Alhambra," by Mr. Albert Smith, produced at Easter and continued without interruption to the close of the season. The total number of pieces acted amounted to twenty-seven, of which twelve were entirely new.

In the early part of the season, Her Majesty engaged a box, which she has retained annually ever since, and still more satisfactorily marked her approbation of the theatre by constant personal attendance.

On the occasion of their benefit, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean appeared in the "Gamester," and "Honey-moon"—the same bill which had been selected ten years before, in Dublin, on the day of their marriage. The performance was received with enthusiasm by a house crowded to the roof, and called forth long articles of encomium from the leading papers. The characters of *Mr. and Mrs. Beverley* have always been popular with the leading performers of the day. Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean had been accustomed to act their principal parts together for many years during their tours in the principal country theatres, and their later engagements in London. They thus acquired a power of producing combined effects by long study and practice—a perfection of art which strangers cannot reach, who only meet at accidental intervals in professional life, and have no harmony of thought or reciprocal feeling, in conception of character. By constant association, they were enabled to act up to each other with a certainty of perfect co-operation, tending greatly to the advantage of the play represented, which we have often seen marred and weakened by a want of this complete understanding between the parties on whom the weight and interest almost entirely rest. We can recall no instance in which the value of mutual support more forcibly demonstrates itself than in the performance of *Beverley and Mrs. Beverley* by Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean. The most captious critic would have been puzzled to detect an oversight or propose an improvement in their personification of these two characters. Nothing was wanting to the completeness of the picture, and nothing over-

looked from the beginning to the end. We were not startled by a momentary flash of brilliancy, followed by half an hour of unexciting tameness. All was sustained, equal, and impressive, with every varying shade of passion justly discriminated. Mrs. C. Kean is peculiarly suited to *Mrs. Beverley*, uniting with a natural elegance of manner, refined sensibility and unaffected pathos. Her never varying affection for her husband under all trials, her perfect confidence in his heart notwithstanding the errors of his head, were beautifully portrayed. In a character so carefully studied by several generations of highly-gifted actresses, it is not easy to strike out new effects, or to introduce untried readings. To deviate from what has been done before, merely to avoid comparison or for the temptation of novelty, is not only injudicious, but opens a dangerous avenue to failure. Mrs. C. Kean's conception and execution of this part were consistent with sound taste and judgment. She is neither a copyist nor an unnecessary innovator. Her general style is not formed on any particular model or school, but follows nature, the great teacher and master of all. Her reply to *Stukely's* insinuations against *Beverley's* fidelity, contained in the words, "I'll not believe it," was one of the most powerfully original points we ever saw delivered. The whole of the scene with *Stukely*, and her last interview with *Beverley* when he is dying in the prison, absorbed the attention of the audience between mingled plaudits and tears, to an extent of which the modern stage affords but few examples.

Some amongst the surviving residue of the old play-goers, who exist on reminiscences of the past, and have little sympathy with living pretensions, speak with rapture of the "astounding sensation" produced by Mrs. Siddons in *Mrs. Beverley*. Nothing, they say,

could ever approach the manner in which she uttered the simple sentence, "Mistaken had been kinder;" or her entire scene where she rejects the overtures of *Stukely*; or her exclamation in the fifth act to *Jarvis*,—" 'Tis false, old man," &c. ; or her hysteric laugh, and look of fixed despair, at the death of *Beverley*. All this may be true to the letter, as to the effect produced, but it ought not to incline us to undervalue the talents of the artists we possess, or lead us to forget that acting was considered more miraculous, was more fashionably followed, and much more fervently applauded, fifty years ago, than it is now. An apathetic chill has damped the spirit of recent audiences, which tames down the fervor and intensity of the most impassioned performers, checks their confidence in themselves, and often paralyzes their most powerful efforts. Dr. Johnson remarks, with great truth, in his preface to Shakespeare:—"All, perhaps, are more willing to honour past than present excellence; the great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns and the beauties of the ancients. While an author is yet living, we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead, we rate them by the best." What is here applied to authors only may be readily extended to actors and artists in general. A statue is often raised to the buried merit, which, when alive, was scarcely recognized.

Not many years since, a short time only before the revival of the "Gamester" at the Princess's, when it was acted at the Haymarket and other theatres in London, more than one critic in the daily papers volunteered a crusade against the play itself. It was called obsolete, old-fashioned, common-place, vapid, prosy, out of date; we are not sure that *twaddling* was not amongst the disparaging epithets. The subject was pronounced

too exciting ; the catastrophe too harrowing for the feelings ; while the *weakness* of *Beverley* rendered him too contemptible for sympathy.

All this was easily written, had an imposing aspect in print, and may have passed current with hundreds of mere casual readers who are caught by a novel and intrepid assertion, without troubling themselves to inquire through what mode of reasoning it can be proved. To us, the "Gamester" has always appeared a moral lesson worthy of the pulpit, a domestic tragedy of the highest order. Simple, powerful, effective, and probable in the construction of the plot ; clear, intelligible, nervous, and pathetic in the dialogue. A leaf from nature's book, applicable to all times, and all countries ; not a page from the registry of any particular manners, or a record of any passing absurdity which may command its votaries to-day, and is totally forgotten to-morrow. The characters appear to be made for the situations they are placed in, and the incidents develop themselves naturally as if produced by the characters.

A vice is here held up to detestation, with all its appalling consequences, more absorbing than any other, which has brought greater desolation to the hearths of families, and has entailed more misery on the descendants of those who have thus immolated themselves on the altar of that destroying Moloch, than human weakness, tyranny, and depravity, have ever produced in any other shape, or through any other agency. As Dr. Young observed, "the fatal prevalence of gaming required such a caustic as the concluding scene of this play presented." The very want of resolution and consistent firmness in *Beverley*, the readiness with which he falls into the snares of his tempter and evil genius ; those very points which have been somewhat hastily objected to, consti-

ate the strong truth, the reality, the interest, and above all, the moral warning of the story. Of ten average men, nine are weak in some particular instance. This is the besetting failure of humanity, and this natural weakness often engenders more mischief than positive crime. The absolutely wicked are few in number compared with the victims they entangle, without whom their power for evil would be circumscribed almost to nullity. They would die for lack of sustenance, or be forced to prey upon each other, and become extinct for want of necessary food to keep their restless faculties in action. The moral teacher keeps back the more valuable half of his lesson if he suppresses the power of bold iniquity in operation on the irresolutely virtuous. As men are constituted (and who is to change their organization?), the number who resist successfully is far exceeded by those who sink when strong temptation presents itself. To deny sympathy to the fallen, is to close the volume of our own humanity and to fly to ideal standards which cease to be instructive because we know them to be pitiful. We must study man as he is, if we desire or expect to extract profit from his example, either in folly or in wisdom, in error or in excellence.

It was also quite bewildering to be told that the last scene of any tragedy could be too harrowing or exciting for the taste of an age which positively revelled in the monstrous exaggerations of French melodrama and German metaphysics, the most extravagant flights of which were eagerly acknowledged and hailed with capturous evidences of enjoyment. If the most salutary elements of legitimate tragedy are not impressively embodied in this fine play, we shall really feel indebted to some more sublimated discoverer who will enlighten us as to where they are to be found and in what they consist.

Charles Kean's *Beverley* was in every respect worthy of his gifted associate. It was, perhaps, his very best assumption, up to that time, out of the Shakespearean range. His attitude of deep despair, and the expression of his countenance when first discovered, furnished an index and an unmistakeable prologue to what was to follow. Before the actor had spoken a dozen lines the audience penetrated his masterly conception of the character, and were prepared for all the thrilling incidents which form the sequel, and rise on each other in rapid succession. The scene in the gambling-house with *Stukely*, in the third act, after he had ventured and lost his last resource, was given with overwhelming power. To call it impassioned is to speak faintly. It was an absolute whirlwind, a sweeping tempest of agitated frenzy, bearing down all before it, and producing an effect on the audience which proclaimed its terrible reality. His dying struggles in the last scene were equally impressive. One of the distinguishing characteristics of his style is the identity with which he marks his stage deaths, according to the causes and circumstances under which they are supposed to take place. The cold, calculating observer, who can think and write of the fate of *Beverley* excites no commiseration, has never seen the part embodied by Charles Kean, or has schooled himself into an insensible, iron stoicism, which sets feeling at defiance, laughs at the calamities of life, and, as Shakespeare says, "makes a pish at chance and suffrance." We envy not the frigid philosophy or callous indifference which could look on such acting, in such a drama, without deriving benefit from the "salutary warning" which Dr. Johnson emphatically describes as the end and triumph of the tragic muse. Even the cruel tyrant of Phææ wept at a tragedy of Euripides; and we doubt if any one, however possessed by the passions of

lay, could witness the "Gamester" without a determination to reform.

The partnership between Messrs. Keeley and Charles Kean terminated by mutual arrangement, before the theatre re-opened for the next season. The former, with his talented lady, remained members of the company, but the latter was announced as the sole manager.

Amongst other "memorabilia" which marked the year 1851, we must enumerate the retirement from the stage of William Charles Macready, who, during his long London career of thirty-five years, had always filled a prominent, and latterly a commanding situation. He went through a succession of farewell performances at the Haymarket during the early part of the winter, and, on the 26th of February, closed with his final benefit at Drury Lane, selecting *Macbeth* for his last appearance. In his parting address, he spoke fervently of the public support which had cheered him through many difficulties, and enhanced the happiness of his life. "The lapse of time," he said, "has not dimmed the recollection of the encouragement which gave impulse to the inexperienced day of my youth, and stimulated me to persevere when struggling hardly for equality of position with the genius and talent of the great artists whose superior excellence I ungrudgingly admitted, admired, and honoured." Following the example of Young, he ceased from his labours while his strength was yet entire, and for the same reason. "Because," he concluded, "I would not willingly abate one jot of your esteem, I retire with the chief of yet unfailing powers, rather than linger on the scene, to set in contrast the feeble style of age with the more vigorous exertions of better years." Soon after his retirement, he was honoured, as his great predecessor John Kemble had been, with a public dinner, and the presentation of a testimonial. It was the second time he

had received a similar compliment—the first having been conferred upon him on his secession from the managerial sceptre of Covent Garden, in 1839.

Macready practised in an excellent school, and long stood side by side in honourable competition with all the greatest performers of his day. He followed not the previous style, but with the boldness of a strong mind created one for himself; peculiar and startling, not eminent for grace, but thrilling with effect. Nature had endowed him with a noble voice, and study gifted him with the resources of elocution. He was often accused of mannerism, but this charge, of somewhat vague definition, may lie against almost every artist who has attained distinguished eminence. James Kenney, the dramatic author, was fond of maintaining that an actor ought to be a mannerist, provided the manner was good and original. Whether by direct teaching, or the reflected fascination of example, Macready engendered a host of imitators, none of whom have emulated the reputation of their model, or upheld the strong personality which stamped his conceptions. They were for the most part, servile and offensive, where he was powerful and original. It is satisfactory to think that the breed tends to extinction rather than increase.

Even to his concluding season, it continued to be a debated question whether Macready was, in the enlarged sense, a first-rate representative of first-rate Shakespearean characters. But on the subject of his managerial efforts to advance the interests of the legitimate drama, and to illustrate worthily the works of our great poet, there has been but one decision—that of the warmest praise. He proved himself a valuable pioneer, opening avenues untrod before; and would in all probability have advanced much farther, had the encouragement kept pace with the outlay. It has been

requently stated in conversation, and reiterated in print, that during his four years' management, of two seasons each term, at the two great national theatres, he suffered in his fortune to the amount of 10,000*l*. Such a result, supposing it to be an approximation to the truth, was sufficient to check the most enthusiastic spirit, and impresses a conviction that the public were not yet prepared for the complete revolution which Mr. Charles Kean has since effected.

The modern drama is almost identified with the name of Macready: Knowles, Bulwer, Talfourd, Sheil, and Byron, may claim him as their predominant illustrator. While the works of these popular writers retain their hold on the living generation, the memory of his acting in *Virginius* and *William Tell*, in *Ion*, *Werner*, *Claude Melnotte*, and *Cardinal Richelieu* will also be recorded with corresponding admiration.

Macready twice visited France professionally; America three times. Of all the English tragedians, he proved to be the leading favourite with the Parisians, and his great profits in the United States evinced the popularity he enjoyed throughout the transatlantic continent. His third and last tour was curtailed by the riot at New York, in May, 1849, fomented, it was said, by a rival actor, whose name, whether deservedly or not, has thereby become linked to a notoriety as unenviable as that of Erostratus; and even more criminal, for instead of the temple only, his madness (should the report be true) involved the destruction of the worshippers. If that actor had any part, directly or indirectly, in the savage and unmanly tumult, which drove Macready from America, and caused the sacrifice of many lives, he has much to answer for.

Mr. Macready carried with him to the privacy of his domestic circle, a love of classic lore and studious habits,

resources for the evening of life which ordinary casualties have no power to diminish. But his hearth has been unexpectedly desolated, and his household deities rudely shivered round him. Gaps have been formed which never can be filled up again. These sad visitations have called forth the unmingled sympathy which has been universally felt and acknowledged.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE UNDER THE SOLE MANAGEMENT OF MR. CHARLES KEAN—THE SEASON COMMENCES WITH THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR—CAST OF THE COMEDY—CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS—KING JOHN, THE FIRST GREAT HISTORICAL REVIVAL—MRS. SIDDONS'S REFLECTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF CONSTANCE—THE CORSICAN BROTHERS—MANY VERSIONS AND BURLESQUES OF THE LATTER—ITS GREAT ATTRACTIONS AT THE PRINCESS'S—SUPERNATURAL AGENCY—WELL AUTHENTICATED GHOST STORIES—MADEMOISELLE CLAIROU'S DISEMBODIED PERSECUTOR—TENDER PRECAUTIONS—OUR CLERKS—THE EASTER SPECTACLE, WITTIKIND AND HIS BROTHERS—MR. LOVELL'S PLAY OF THE TRIAL OF LOVE—THE PHANTASM OF THE VAMPIRE—THE PANTOMIME OF BILLY TAYLOR—CLOSE OF THE SEASON ON THE 14TH OF JULY—NUMBER OF PIECES PERFORMED—GENERAL RESULT.

ON Saturday, the 22d of November, 1851, the Princess's theatre re-opened under the sole direction of Mr. Charles Kean, with Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor," divested of the operative and textual interpolations by which it had been too long disfigured. It now became once more what the author had constructed it for—a legitimate comedy, with a rich assemblage of well-contrasted characters, leading naturally to a quick succession of incidents arising from the situations as they occur. The fine, racy dialogue was no longer impeded by the introduction of bravuras, interminable duets, and flourishes, so interwoven in labyrinthine mazes, that it appeared impossible for the singers ever to get out of them; and made the audience almost echo Dr. Johnson's wish, that such painful vocalism had been impossible. Even more misplaced was the similar attempt to operate the "Comedy of Errors," the whole effect of which

depends on the rapidity with which the action is carried on, and the perpetually recurring entrances and exits of the persons mistaken for each other.

A clever journal, in congratulating the public on the banishment of music from the present revival of Shakespeare's witty comedy, observed:—"Only fancy the arch and perplexing rogueries of the frolicsome dame upon amorous *Old Jack* interrupted every five minute by warbling information that

'Crabbed age and youth
Cannot live together ;'

and by reminding us of the old proverb,

'All that glitters is not gold.'

Imagine, if you can, characters which ought to be sustained by actresses of first-rate *comic talents*, in the hands of English *prima donnas* ; and, to complete the absurdity of the contrast, the accepted lover of sweet *Anne Page* personated by a gigantic or punchy tenor who stops the action of the play at the exact moment when it is worked up to a point, to sing to you the pleasing intelligence that

'The winter it is past,
And the summer's come at last ;'

to impart in tuneful obscurity substituted for words, the 'the wintry wind' is

'Not so unkind
As man's ingratitude ;'

and in 'sweet sounds' to make you acquainted with the pleasing fiction that

'A lover's eyes will strike an eagle blind.' "

The subjoined cast of the play will furnish an idea of the manner in which the restored text of Shakespeare was given at the Princess's on this occasion:—*Falst*, Mr. Bartley ; *Ford*, Mr. C. Kean ; *Page*, Mr. J. Vinin

Fenton, Mr. J. Cathcart; *Shallow*, Mr. Meadows; *Slender*, Mr. Harley; *Sir Hugh Evans*, Mr. Keeley; *Doctor Caius*, Mr. Wigan; *Host*, Mr. Addison; *Bardolph*, Mr. Wynn; *Pistol*, Mr. Ryder; *Nym*, Mr. F. Cooke; *Mrs. Ford*, Mrs. C. Kean; *Mrs. Page*, Mrs. Keeley; *Anne Page*, Miss Mary Keeley; *Mrs. Quickly*, Mrs. Winstanley.

The same paper from which we have quoted above, and which, under a changed dynasty, subsequently became one of Charles Kean's bitterest assailants, contained the following encomium on his performance of *Ford*:—"We have never seen this character so ably conceived, or executed with such masterly skill. The nervous, irritable manner he displayed in the scene where he induces *Falstaff* to undertake his mission to *Mrs. Ford* gave ample evidence of how deeply and correctly Mr. Kean has studied the peculiarities of the jealous husband. It was one of the best pieces of *nature* we have for some time seen displayed, and as such was felt and appreciated by warm applause." Actors of high standing, John Kemble included, were wont to deliver the part of *Ford* in a tone of measured, solemn declamation, forgetting that the extraordinary phase which jealousy assumes in this eccentric humorist is as distinct from the tragic passion of *Othello* or *Leontes* as the wit of *Falstaff* is from the pathos of *Lear*. The effect here is to be produced by comic extravagance of manner and utterance, in keeping with the still more extravagant suspicion, which becomes utterly incongruous when coupled with a staid, collected demeanour. Those who are old enough to remember Wroughton in *Ford** have

* Richard Wroughton (a native of Bath) retired in 1815. A second-class actor in general, with strong physical deficiencies, but occasionally inspired to excellence, as in *Ford*; *Dartemont* ("Deaf and Dumb"); *Sir John Restless* ("All in the Wrong"); and *Apemantus*, in "Timon of Athens."

seen what Shakespeare intended and Charles Kean revived.

The "Merry Wives of Windsor" ran for twenty-five nights, and then made way for "King John," produced on the 9th of February, 1852. This may be considered the new manager's first *great* attempt on the plan he has since carried out with such indomitable perseverance and triumphant success. He had long felt that, even by his most eminent predecessors, Shakespeare in many respects had been imperfectly illustrated. He had seen what earlier actors and managers had accomplished. He felt that steps had been taken in the right direction, and longed ardently to press farther on in the same path, to a more complete end. No longer fettered by restraining influences, and confident in the result, although previous experiments were attended by failure, he entered boldly on the enterprise. The result is before the public. It has worked a complete revolution in the dramatic system by the establishment of new theories and the subversion of old ones. The time had at length arrived when a total purification of Shakespeare, with every accompaniment that refined knowledge, diligent research, and chronological accuracy could supply, was suited to the taste and temper of the age, which had become eminently pictorial and exacting beyond all former precedent. The days had long passed when audiences could believe themselves transported from Italy to Athens by the power of poetical enchantment without the aid of scenic appliances.

In addition to the managerial credit which Mr. Charles Kean established by this early effort, and the still higher expectations he gave birth to from the manner in which "King John" was placed before the public, he made an important step in his reputation as an actor of the first class by a very complete and well-studied

embodiment of the principal character—one of the most difficult, and perhaps altogether the most repulsive on the stage. There is nothing to assist the representative—no taking qualities, no commanding energy, no brilliancy, even in crime. All is sordid, contemptible, gloomy, and ferocious. Yet there is dramatic strength in this craven monarch, as Shakespeare has drawn him, which has commanded the attention of the greatest tragedians. Old stage records tell us how the “shining lights” of other days acquitted themselves in this arduous part. According to them, Quin lumbered painfully through, growled some passages, bellowed others, and chanted the rest. Churchill, in the “Rosciad,” sneers at Mossop for brow-beating the French King, and says the poor tame monarch seemed in danger of being swallowed up by his voracious brother of England. Sheridan, the elder, was pronounced too monotonous; Powell deficient in weight, and Holland exuberant in noise. Garrick never could entirely satisfy himself in the part, and alternated between *John* and *Faulconbridge*, without reaching perfect mastery in either. Had his fire and spirit been trebled, he lacked the six feet and the thews and sinews without which *Faulconbridge* cannot satisfy the eye of the spectator. John Kemble’s performance of the *King* was considered faultless; Young, following in the track of Kemble, played it with almost equal effect. Many estimated it as Macready’s best Shakespearean attempt; and in Charles Kean’s list it may perhaps take the fifth place, giving precedence to his *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Wolsey*, and *Shylock*.

The force of poetical genius is wonderfully exhibited in compounding a stage hero from such unpromising materials. Unlike his kindred of the house of Anjou, who were generally remarkable for gigantic proportions and a gallant bearing, John was as insignificant in form

as he was timid and grovelling in mind. His stature, when the skeleton was measured on the opening of the tomb in Worcester Cathedral, proved to be diminutive almost to dwarfishness; but his capacity for crime was illimitable. He was all gloom, without a scintillation of light, or a momentary interval of relief. Jests have been recorded of Tiberius and Caligula; Pope Alexander VI. and Louis XI. had within their dark spirits a germ of diabolical humour; but the features of John Lackland were never known to relax into a smile, or his tongue to give utterance to a mirthful sentiment. The scene where he darkly suggests the murder of *Arthur* to *Hubert*, and the terrible agonies of his death, are trying tests of the actor's power, in which he can raise no sympathy, and must extort applause by such life-like touches of painting as none but a great master can elicit.

In the *Lady Constance*, Mrs. C. Kean stepped out of the line peculiarly recognized as her own, and assumed a character of matronly dignity and agonizing passion, which had been supposed to tax to their utmost the surpassing energies of her greatest predecessor, Mrs. Siddons. She had performed the part with universal approbation in New York, but had not yet ventured it in London. It was a hazardous undertaking, with the reminiscences attached to it. The result completely took the public by surprise. Never was a character represented with more true feeling and natural pathos; with more convincing evidence of careful study, or a more complete demonstration of having thoroughly caught up the spirit of the author. If Mrs. Siddons filled her audience with superior awe, Mrs. C. Kean drew more largely upon their tears. Campbell says, in his "Life of Mrs. Siddons," that it was not unusual for spectators to leave the house when her part in the

tragedy was over, as if they could no longer enjoy Shakespeare himself when she ceased to be his interpreter. This sounds very like a poet's hallucination. The sentence reads with an imposing air, but we have never heard it corroborated. *Constance* disappears from the scene in the third act. We find it impossible to believe that any one would lose two-fifths of a fine play, and take so little interest in the general subject, as not to wait for the catastrophe. What the biographer quotes as the great departed representative's own impression of the character is of higher value, and comprises a useful lesson on the importance of *abstraction* in the art of acting. In the memoranda left behind her, Mrs. Siddons says :—"Whenever I was called upon to personate the character of *Constance*, I never, from the beginning of the play to the end of my part in it, once suffered my dressing-room door to be closed, in order that my attention might be constantly fixed on those distressing events, which, by this means, I could plainly hear going on upon the stage, the terrible effects of which progress were to be represented by me. Moreover, I never omitted to place myself, with *Arthur* in my hand, to hear the march, when, upon the reconciliation of England and France, they enter the gates of Angiers, to ratify the contract of marriage between the *Dauphin* and the *Lady Blanche*; because the sickening sounds of that march would usually cause the bitter tears of rage, disappointment, betrayed confidence, baffled ambition, and, above all, the agonizing feelings of maternal affection, to gush into my eyes. In short, the spirit of the whole drama took possession of my mind and frame, by my attention being incessantly riveted to the passing scene."

A strange contrast to this refined conception of the study that great acting requires, is presented by the

habitual carelessness of Mrs. Pritchard, a tragic actress who, until Mrs. Siddons appeared, stood first on the list. It is recorded of her, that she never read more of the play of "Macbeth" than her own part, as furnished by the prompter; and was perfectly astonished when Garrick purified it of the interpolations of Davenant, and restored the original text.* Quin, also, observed with indignation, "What does little Davy mean by all this nonsense about a new version? Don't I act Shakespeare's *Macbeth*?"

The carelessness and habitual confidence of the young pillars of the drama of the present day, would do well to pause over Mrs. Siddons's memoranda, and other valuable precepts which have been bequeathed for their instruction; provided they will condescend to profit by them. They are greedy enough of celebrity, but dislike the study indispensable to its acquirement. They look eagerly to the top of the ladder, but are apt to forget the laborious instalments by which it is to be reached.

Ten years before the production of "King John" at the Princess's, Mr. Macready had revived the same play, with much appropriate pomp, at Drury Lane. His field of action was larger, which gave him many advantages; but in accuracy of detail, the second representation surpassed the first. From the list of authorities, named in the play-bill as having been consulted by Mr. C. Kean, an idea may be formed of the amount of reading and research necessary to produce the perfect restoration which was aimed at and attained. The public see the result. They are satisfied, surprised, and excited to vehement applause. But they do not sufficiently appreciate, and, perhaps, scarcely understand, the ability and industry by which, in three hours, they have gathered in a store

* According to Dr. Johnson, Mrs. Pritchard was vulgar, illiterate, and spoke bad English.

of information which years of laborious study could alone convey to them through any other channel.

Before quitting the subject of "King John" at the Princess's Theatre, it would be unjust not to name, in a special sentence of approval, the impressive acting of Miss Kate Terry, then a child of ten years of age, as *Prince Arthur*, and of Mr. Ryder as *Hubert*. *Hubert* is subordinate in rank; but he stands in prominent situations in the play, and requires an actor of weight and judgment. Unless he plays *up* to the *King* in the scenes in which they appear together, especially in the third act, the effect will go for nothing. George Frederick Cooke, after his great London success, sustained this apparently second-rate character with John Kemble, and won more applause than was anticipated, although placed far below his mark. Bridgewater was the *Hubert* in Quin's time: a painstaking actor, and a thrifty man, who combined the opposite trades of a vendor of coals and a disciple of Thespis. One night, after the scene in the fourth act, upon going into the green-room, Quin took him by the hand, and thanked him for his earnest support on that particular occasion: "for sometimes, you know, Bridge," said he, "that, in the midst of a most important scene, your ideas wander to your coal-wharf, and you are thinking less of Shakespeare than of measuring out a bushel of coals to some old crone, who looks as if she would never pay for them."

A fortnight after the production of "King John," the performances were varied by another specimen of the French modern school, even more peculiar than its predecessor, "Pauline," and destined to a much more enduring attraction. In this instance, the supernatural was most ingeniously and effectively blended with the romantic. We allude to the far-famed "Corsican Brothers," who

were first transplanted to the London boards on the 24th of February, 1852. This singular drama ran sixty-six nights during the first season; and has been repeated, in all, nearly two hundred and fifty times. No sooner did it receive the stamp of current fashion at the Princess's, than almost every theatre in the metropolis brought forward versions of their own. For a time, the subject became a perfect mania; and, as a matter of course, was burlesqued. There can be no safer criterion of success than ridicule. No opera can be said to have made a hit, unless the telling airs are ground on barrel organs at the corner of every street, and parodied by itinerant ballad-singers. The taste which enjoys and encourages travesty, though participated in by many, is certainly not of an elevated order. When it invades Shakespeare, it ought to be denounced as sacrilege, and inspires a wish for a special act; or, that the outraged bard could obtain a day rule, and come back in the flesh to carry off the perpetrators bodily to condign judgment in some penal limbo, created expressly for the purpose.

As regards the "Corsican Brothers," nothing could be better than the acting of Mr. Charles Kean in the characters of the imperturbable, self-collected *Fabien*, and the gentler *Louis dei Franchi*; and nothing could be more real and exciting than the masqued carnival at the Opera House in Paris. But, still, the piece owed much of its extraordinary success to the *Ghost*, with the novel and appalling manner in which its agency was introduced.

Unquestionably, there is comfort and consolation, blended with positive enjoyment, in a well-authenticated ghost story. In spite of the advance of practical utilitarianism, with the accompanying decline of romantic feeling, few are willing to give up Sir George Villiers,

Mrs. Veal, Lord Tyrone, Lord Lyttleton's dove and white lady, or the stern half-pay Major who appeared to his old friend and comrade, to reprimand him for suffering his favourite sword to get rusty. All the world listens with interest to these and similar records. There is a fascination in a tale of supernatural horror, which philosophy can no more explain than it can withstand. The credulous followers of spirit rapping and clairvoyance, the dupes of calculating impostors, are poor representatives of this genuine faith.

More people believe in ghosts than choose to acknowledge their credulity. Even scoffers tremble while they pretend to laugh. Let us remember what the sage Plac says, in "Rasselas:"—"That the dead are seen more I will not undertake to maintain, against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages and of all nations. There is no people, rude or learned, amongst whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which, perhaps, prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth. Those that never heard of one another would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers can very little weaken the general evidence; and some who deny it with their tongues confess it by their fears."

There are, it must be admitted, two damaging points connected with ghosts, in respect to the fulfilment of their mission. They cannot take the initiative in dialogue, they can only speak when they are spoken to; and in nineteen cases out of twenty, they frighten those to whom they appear to such an extent, that they render them tongue-tied and paralyzed.

Mademoiselle Clairon, the celebrated French tragic actress, the rival and contemporary of Dumesnil, and

the immediate predecessor of Raucourt, Duchesnois, and Georges, was haunted for two years* by a ghost, who appears to have been exclusively malicious, and disturbed in his rest by disappointed love. He was a young man who had sought her acquaintance soon after her first brilliant success. She received him into intimacy, liked his society, gave him, certainly, some encouragement, relieved him from pecuniary difficulties but refused to marry him under the most passionate and repeated entreaties. They had known each other for about two years and a half, when the ill-starred lover, finding himself on his death-bed, implored her to grant him a last interview; a request which those who surrounded her warmly seconded, but her own repugnance prevented her from complying with. He died, attended by servants, and the only friend, a female, whom he had latterly admitted to his confidence. On that same evening, as the clock struck eleven, Mademoiselle Clairon being at supper with a large party, a dreadful cry was heard by all present, which she immediately recognized as the voice of her deceased lover, and fainted with emotion and terror. For more than two years this same unearthly cry, which seemed to proceed from the empty air, was constantly heard by her wherever she happened to be at the moment, and by all who were present at the time. In vain the police established the most diligent search, thinking it might either be a trick or a conspiracy; but nothing ever transpired to shake the impression of its being a supernatural visitation. Sometimes the sharp report of a gun or pistol was substituted for the cry, accompanied by a loud and continued clapping of hands. This last demonstration reminded her of the favour of the public to which she had been so long accustomed; the effect was agreeable and consolatory.

* See her Memoirs, written by herself.

rather than productive of terror. All this went on for the time already named ; and on the last occasion there was an accompaniment of melodious music, as if the hostile visitant was taking his departure in a friendly and reconciled state of mind.

Not long after this, an elderly lady was announced, and admitted to the presence of La Clairon, appearing before her as a perfect stranger. They sat down and gazed on each other in perfect silence, and with instinctive interest. At length the old lady explained who she was, and the object of her visit. She proved to be the friend of M. de S—— ; had attended him on his death-bed ; and now felt prompted by incontrollable anxiety to be the woman whose cruelty had hastened his decease. After much circumlocution, and many explanations, "Mademoiselle," said she, "I do not blame your conduct ; and my poor friend fully admitted his obligations to you ; but his unhappy passion mastered his judgment, and your refusal to see him embittered, while it accelerated, his last moments. His eyes were fixed upon the clock, anxiously watching the motion of the hands, when half-past ten his valet announced to him your positive refusal to come. After a short silence, he seized me by the arm, in a paroxysm of despair, which nearly deprived me of my senses, and exclaimed, 'Unfeeling woman ! she will gain nothing by this ; I will persecute her after death, as I have followed her throughout my life !' I tried to calm him ; but he died as he uttered these dreadful words."

Such is the account which Mademoiselle Clairon herself has left of this very extraordinary episode in her personal history. She states the fact, without pretending to understand or account for it ; but modestly admits that she feels herself too insignificant to suppose that she could be selected as an object or medium of supernatural

communication. Assuredly she was no accomplice in these "manifestations," which, like the more recent table-juggling, were exhibited in the presence of many witnesses.

Two light one-act pieces, "Tender Precautions," by Mr. Serle; and "Our Clerks," by Mr. Tom Taylor, were successfully produced in the early part of the season of 1851-2. The run of the latter was prematurely stopped by the secession from the Princess's of Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, who had performed the principal characters, written expressly for them, and measured to their peculiarly happy style. The Easter spectacle of "Wittikind and his Brothers," was less universally approved, and reached only twenty-one repetitions, after which it "died and made no sign." This tale of fairy magic combined much splendour of dresses and scenery, lively dialogue, and clever acting; but the plot and story were not skillfully condensed. They dragged on slowly, producing tedium, which subsequent curtailment was unable to relieve. Burlesque had passed its hey-day, and began to give evident symptoms of decrepitude.

On the 7th of June, Mr. Lovell's play of the "Trial of Love" was represented for the first time; the two principal characters by Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean. Neither the actors nor the author, on this occasion, came up to the level of the high reputation they had jointly assisted in establishing for the "Wife's Secret," to which admirable drama the present bore considerable resemblance in the construction of plot, the time of action selected, the style of interest, and the truthfulness and grace of sentiment expressed in language of more than ordinary poetic beauty. Less than this was not to be looked for from the pen of a writer so well known and so justly appreciated as Mr. Lovell. Judged by a positive standard, the merits of the "Trial of Love" call for warm

panegyric; but the high place in literature which the writer had attained, exposed him to a comparison with himself—a trying, though an inevitable ordeal. Tested by his own fame, it must be admitted that something was deficient. The characters appeared to be repetitions of his own fancy, reflected symbols of those he had previously created, and with which his mind had become so identified, that he drew them again without the consciousness of their being recognizable as copies of original portraits from the one hand. An objection or blemish of this nature is more strongly obvious in a play than in any other form of imaginary composition. The "Trial of Love" ran twenty-three nights, greatly to the enjoyment of successive audiences. With the exception of the "Provost of Bruges," and the "Wife's Secret," both by the same author, we cannot readily name any recent play, belonging to the same class, of superior retentions.

On the 14th of June Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean selected the "Trial of Love" for their benefit, after which was produced a very extraordinary melo-dramatic extravaganza (by Mr. Dion Bourcicault), with as singular a designation—"The Vampire; a Phantasm, related in three Dramas." This strange specimen of the worst possible style of French taste, bore no affinity, excepting the first part of the title, to an operatic romance, by Méhul, which came out at the English Opera-house in 1820, and derived its origin (through French descent) from a fragment attached to one of Lord Byron's poems, and a tale by Dr. Polidori, for some time attributed, though quite erroneously, to the noble bard himself. The whole affair, including the performance of the "Vampire" hero, by the English dramatizer, may be considered a mistake, of which the less that is said the better.

The season closed on the 14th of July, having been much shorter in duration, and considerably more limited in remunerative success, than its immediate predecessor. For this result there were many obvious reasons amongst which might be placed foremost the temporary reaction, very naturally to be looked for, which had succeeded the unusual excitement of the Great Exhibition. The different pieces acted amounted to exactly the same number as in the year preceding, namely twenty-seven; of which nine were new. Amongst the latter, the pantomime of "Billy Taylor" must not be forgotten, which completed its full attraction of nine consecutive weeks, and fully upheld the reputation which the house had long enjoyed in that most important branch of the art dramatic. The pantomime has ever been one of a London manager's safest cards, if played with ordinary skill. No matter how slack business may be before Christmas, he is sure to turn the tide, and "pull up" losses, through the enticement of the fair, usually provided at that genial season. This same ver "to pull up," is one which managers have occasion to conjugate more frequently than they desire, and not always with corresponding success.

There is another anomalous feature attached peculiar to the statistics of pantomime. Success has little to do with excellence. No matter whether the subject be original or hackneyed; whether the concoction be the best or worst of its kind; or whether the thousands must inevitably cost, be reckoned by pounds, shilling or pence,—the length of its run, and the returns to the treasury, are pretty much the same. There is a certain sum to be got in a certain time, and no increased pressure, either in outlay, ornament, or supplementary attraction; no interpolated adjuncts, whether in the shape of acrobats, aeronauts, funambulists, elephants, horse

ancing dogs, or monkeys ; of duplicate harlequins and columbines, multiplied clowns, and incalculable sprites, an swell that sum beyond the average amount. The case reduces itself to a matter of arithmetic. So many holiday visitors for a given number of weeks, give so much and no more.

Harlequin and his associates are not indigenous, but of exotic, continental parentage ; yet they have become, with time and familiar association, so thoroughly engrafted on our island soil, that no country can compete with England in a genuine comic pantomime. The humour is not understood or relished elsewhere. The breed, too, has greatly improved with expatriation. Neither the French *Pierrot*, nor the Italian *Scaramuccia*, or *Zannetto*, are to be compared to our Clown ; while the foreign *Arlechino* is little better than a clumsy, blundering buffoon.

On the 2d of Sept. 1852, Mr. J. K. Chapman, many years editor of the *Sunday Times*, and the husband of Mrs. C. Kean's younger sister, Anne, died at a comparatively early age, leaving his widow and a large family of eleven children utterly unprovided for, and without worldly hope or prospect. From that moment, Mr. C. Kean, animated by the noblest feelings that can warm the heart, has adopted, fostered, and educated them, with even more than the liberality and affection of a parent. Such conduct stands almost without a parallel. It soars above human eulogy, and will find a higher reward than man's approbation.

CHAPTER III.

MR. C. KEAN'S THIRD SEASON AT THE PRINCESS'S—THE PRIMA DONNA—MELODRAMA OF MONT ST. MICHEL—ENGAGEMENT AND FIRST APPEARANCE OF MR. WRIGHT—MR. WESTLAND MARSTON'S PLAY OF ANNE BLAKE—RETIREMENT OF MR. BARTLEY—PANTOMIME OF CHERRY AND FAIR STAR—MR. DOUGLAS JERROLD'S COMEDY OF ST. CUPID, OR DOROTHY'S FORTUNE—REVIVAL OF MACBETH—FLY LEAF—GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PLAY AS NOW REPRESENTED—EASTER SPECTACLE OF MARCO SPADA—REVIVAL OF LORD BYRON'S SARDANAPALUS—FLY LEAF—BURLESQUES—UNFAIRNESS OF THE PRACTICE—MR. T. P. COOKE AT THE PRINCESS'S—CLOSE OF THE SEASON.

CHARLES KEAN'S third campaign at the Princess's commenced on the 18th of September, 1852, with a comedy, in two acts, adapted from the French by Bourcicault, called the "Prima Donna." This new drama introduced Miss Heath, a young beginner of much promise, who made a very favourable impression; and Mr. Walter Lacy, a well-established metropolitan favourite, who succeeded to the post vacated by the departure of Mr. Wigan. The "Prima Donna" ran thirty-four nights; but, though a complete and ingeniously constructed specimen of the drawing-room class, it had scarcely weight enough to constitute the feature of an evening's performance. It was well acted, and pleased without being attractive, inaugurating the season as an agreeable prologue to the more important novelties in active preparation. Within three weeks a romantic melodrama followed, under the title of "Mont St. Michel, or, the Fairy of the Sands;" also derived from a French source, and dramatized by Mr.

Bayle Bernard. The action is supposed to pass in Normandy in 1660, while Cardinal Mazarin exercised dictatorship in France. Every aid that beautiful scenery, punctiliously correct costume, and excellent acting could render, to carry out the ideas of the author, were lavishly bestowed; but thirteen performances wound up the affair. There was something in the arrangement of the piece that failed to stamp it with the expected longevity. It must be remembered, however, as having presented to a new constituency Mr. Wright, so long the comic atlas of the Adelphi, who had now transferred his services to a very different scene of action—the arena as distinct as if he had travelled to Edinburgh or Dublin. Every theatre in London, although it may be separated only by a street from its next neighbour, has an audience exclusive moulded to its own atmosphere. The new comer was received on his entry, as might have been expected, with long and loud applause. He had trod those boards before, and was a returned favourite rather than a total stranger. For an instant he appeared embarrassed, but soon recovered his self-command, and went to his work with the confidence of an experienced practitioner, and a merry glance of his eye, which said emphatically, “our old acquaintanceship has got a little rusty, and we scarcely recognise each other after some years’ absence; but it shall be no fault of mine if we are not on intimate terms before the night is over.” Harley had a part in the same piece, written up to his individual peculiarities, a pompous self-sufficient, empty-headed local magistrate of the *Muddlework* or *Von Dunder* family, who venerates the sacred institution of hanging, and would consign his own father to the “edge of penny cord” without remorse, if it fell within the line of what he persuades himself is his duty. It was delightful to see two such actors as Harley and Wright,

types of different histrionic ages and schools, exchanging hits in friendly contest. They resembled two cunning masters of fence, equally matched, thrusting and parrying, playing *carte* and *tierce*, without advantage on either side.

The third novelty of the season appeared on the 28th of October, in a more important shape than its immediate predecessors,—a five-act play, entitled “Anne Blake,” from the pen of Mr. Westland Marston, the author of “Strathmore,” the “Patrician’s Daughter,” and “Marie de Meranie;” a writer who has placed his name, as a modern dramatist, in the front rank with Sheridan Knowles, Bulwer, Lovell, and Douglas Jerrold. His earlier triumphs had proved that he was gifted with poetical imagination and clear judgment. He had shown himself a master of pathos and a genuine pupil of nature. There was nothing in the title of the present play to forestall attention, or shadow forth startling effects; no promise of agonising incidents or a harrowing catastrophe. It could neither be historical nor romantic. No clue was indicated by which to guess on what the interest might turn, how the story would unravel itself, what passions would be called into action, and by what process the author intended to work out a moral or a conclusion. He must have thought with *Juliet*—“What’s in a name?” when he selected one so simple and inexplicable. All this spoke of the self-reliance of genius, which scorns a flourish of trumpets, and relies on its own inherent strength.

In the construction of his play (which has been printed), Mr. W. Marston appears to have taken simplicity in power to be a great secret of dramatic effect. This is one of the points which marks the mastery of Shakespeare over all other dramatic writers. The incidents in “Anne Blake” are small in themselves, but

they expand under skilful treatment. All that they comprise might happen to any one to-morrow in the ordinary occurrences of life ; and, although a happy issue falls less surely within the category of human events, it here occurs without the appearance of studied design, and is not forcibly dragged in, as Alexander by mere strength severed the Gordian knot, which he was unable by ingenuity to disentangle. The character of the heroine is well suited to call forth the powers of a great actress. Nothing could exceed the truth and beauty of Mrs. C. Kean's performance. Such a part is the more difficult to embody, in proportion as it appears easy. It abounds in fine touches and delicate pencillings, which require the most skilful discrimination, the most refined taste, to bring out with due effect. The author has portrayed a being, naturally kind and sensitive, warped by harsh treatment into fretfulness, caprice, and suspicion, until, with no inherent fault, she is on the brink of fatal error. But the warm heart bubbles up under the imposed surface, and the true principles vindicate their superiority when circumstances give them play. *Colonel Thorold* is a fine, manly, open-hearted soldier, clear and consistent in thought and action, a just type of a noble class which affords many living exemplars. A man of truth in word and deed ; the moral and the executive happily combined, and forming together a character more developed by strength of intellect than oratorical display. All this Mr. C. Kean embodied with the distinctive identity which forms one of his peculiar attributes. When the fourth act terminated with the finest scene of the play, in which *Thorold* relates to *Anne* the story of her parents, and the ties which bound him so closely to her father, there was scarcely a dry eye in the house. Intense attention was only interrupted by suppressed sobs, and when the audience had time to recover, their satisfaction

was expressed in a loud and simultaneous call for the two great performers who had so pleased by paining them. A spontaneous compliment which we believe to be without precedent on the *English* stage. This was repeated with equal fervour as the curtain fell in the fifth act, when the author was also demanded, according to modern custom, and bowed his acknowledgments from a private box.

"Anne Blake" was performed for forty-two nights, but many of the houses were not remunerative. Here was a play, of a high order, beautifully written, admirably acted, and perfect in all the details of scenic decoration and appointment. Successive audiences evinced their delight by what may be considered the most unerring evidences—mingled tears and applause; while the press was unanimous in eulogy. How then is it to be accounted for that the attraction should fall so far below the expectations justly excited? The question resolves itself into one of those unaccountable paradoxes apparently inherent in all matters connected with the drama, and which neither reasoning nor experience can reduce to a satisfactory conclusion. A manager naturally repeats a good play which gives satisfaction as long as his treasury tells him there is a chance of return; but the experiment must have a limit. In the olden time, it was not unusual to force down an indifferent or even a bad novelty until it became productive by mere dint of repetition. But the cause and the consequence have both become obsolete in modern practice.

On Saturday, the 18th of December, the veteran George Bartley took his leave of the stage in a farewell benefit, announced under the immediate patronage of her Majesty and his Royal Highness Prince Albert; that night being the fiftieth anniversary of his appearance in London. After sustaining one of his favourite

characters, *Falstaff*, in the first part of "Henry the Fourth," he addressed a crowded audience in a short well-spoken speech, frequently interrupted by loud applause.

Bartley was born in Bath (1782), a city which has given many good actors to the stage. His father, a decayed merchant, had in the decline of life become box-keeper at the theatre there, which may have led the son to imbibe a taste for the dramatic art. While struggling with the vicissitudes of a strolling life, Mrs. Jordan became acquainted with and recommended him to Sheridan. On the 11th of December, 1802, he appeared at Drury Lane, as *Orlando*, in "As You Like It," and in 1805, was the original *Count Montalban*, in Tobin's successful comedy of the "Honeymoon." For five years he remained the stock juvenile lover and principal talking gentleman; but his short stature and disposition to obesity warned him that his tenure of that line was likely to be brief. He therefore betook himself to the provinces for more general practice, and for the seven succeeding years, filled prominent positions at Glasgow, Dublin, Manchester, and Liverpool, either as lessee, acting-manager, or performer. At Birmingham, in 1814, he married his second wife, Miss Smith, a tragic actress of high repute, considered by many the successor of Mrs. Siddons. In 1815 he re-appeared at Drury Lane, as *Falstaff*, and laid the foundation of his future fame. He next visited America, accompanied by his wife, and returned with an independent fortune, sufficient for people of moderate desires. Not wishing to retire into idle life, he engaged in the winter at Covent Garden, and during the summer recess at the Lyceum, occasionally delivering lectures on astronomy (written for him of course), illustrated by the then new transparent orrery. When Fawcett retired from the stage-management of Covent Garden, Bartley suc-

ceeded him, and retained his post through all changes of dynasty, under Charles Kemble, Laporte, Bunn Macready, and Madame Vestris. He was fond of office, and assimilated himself readily to the views of the shifting authorities. If there was policy rather than independence in this, the most that can be said is, that he followed numerous examples, higher in rank and more expanded in ambition. At a period when he enjoyed professional happiness to a great extent, his domestic comfort was rudely broken up, by the successive deaths within a few years, of his only son and daughter, followed by that of his wife, and consummated by the loss of nearly all his realised fortune in a disastrous speculation. During the years 1848, 1849, and 1850, he was honoured by her Majesty's commands to read at Buckingham Palace, and Windsor Castle, the translations of "Antigone" and "Œdipus," for which Mendelssohn had composed his immortal music. Subsequently he was selected to give lessons in elocution to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. On Saturday, the 17th of July, 1858, while sitting with his old friend and brother actor Mr. Charles Farley, at a performance of the Christy's Minstrels, he was suddenly seized with paralysis, and being immediately conveyed home to his house in Woburn Square, he remained speechless from that period till he died on the following Thursday, the 22d. For a moment or two only he appeared sensible to a kind inquiry from her Majesty as to the state of his health. His remains were deposited with those of his family in the churchyard of St. Mary's, at Oxford.

Bartley maintained through life an unblemished character. The high estimation in which he was held privately, enhanced his professional reputation, perhaps beyond the rank to which his talents entitled him.

He could scarcely be deemed an actor of the very first-class. Although uniformly correct, judicious, hearty, and in earnest, with a perfect knowledge of the mechanism of his art, there was an appearance of labour, a want of that utter concealment of study, and of the rich, unaffected colouring which marked the acknowledged master-pieces of some three or four of his predecessors and contemporaries; such as Munden, Downton, Fawcett, and William Farren. We hesitate to place him exactly in the same line, though, in many respects, an efficient substitute when called upon to fill the place of either

The Pantomime at the Princess's, for the Christmas of 1852-3, on the subject of "Cherry and Fair Star," had the usual success, and rather more than the usual run, extending to ten weeks. On Saturday, the 22d of January, 1853, a new Comedy, in three acts, by the late Douglas Jerrold, entitled "St. Cupid; or, Dorothy's Fortune," was presented for the first time in public. It had been previously recommended for her Majesty's private theatricals at Windsor, and acted by royal command at the Castle, on the preceding evening, Friday, January the 21st. Every effort had been made to establish a favourable anticipation; every possible care had been bestowed on the rehearsals, and the acting throughout gave the most unqualified satisfaction. The principal characters were sustained by Mrs. C. Kean, Mrs. Walter Lacy, Mr. Wright, Mr. Harley, Mr. Walter Lacy, Mr. J. Vining, and Mr. Ryder. The comedy was well received by the public, and noticed by the critics in a just and complimentary strain. It was played thirty-seven nights, but with very limited attraction (the receipts averaging considerably less than the expenditure), and is not likely ever to be asked for again. There was a superabundance of the epigrammatic

terseness of diction, the sarcastic pungency, the sparkling flashes of humour, the originality of design, the distinctness of character, for which the brilliant writer had long been celebrated ; but the one great principle of dramatic vitality—construction—was wanting. Of plot there was little, and of incident less. It was all dialogue ; but the wittiest dialogue will not alone make an effective play. Without the action and situations by which they are enforced, even the inspired lessons of Shakespeare would fall flatly upon the minds of his most devoted worshippers.

The tragedy of “Macbeth” was performed before her Majesty at Windsor Castle, on Friday the 4th of February. On Monday, the 14th of the same month, it was given to the public at the Princess’s. On this occasion, Mr. C. Kean, for the first time, appended to his ordinary play bill, an additional “Fly Leaf,” in which he prepared the audience for many innovations in architecture and costume, and named the authorities he had consulted. It ran thus:—

“The success which attended the production of ‘King John,’ in 1852, has encouraged me to attempt a second Shakespearean revival on the same scale. The very uncertain information, however, which we possess respecting the dress worn by the inhabitants of Scotland, in the eleventh century, renders any attempt to present this tragedy attired in the costume of the period a task of very great difficulty. I hope, therefore, I may not be deemed presumptuous if I intrude a few words upon the subject, and endeavour to explain upon what authorities I have based my opinions.

“In the absence of any positive information handed down to us upon this point, I have borrowed materials from those nations to whom Scotland was continually opposed in war. The continual inroads of the Norse-

ren, and the invasion of Canute, in 1031, who, combining in his own person the sovereignty of England, Norway, and Denmark, was the most powerful monarch of his time, may have taught, at least the higher classes, the necessity of adopting the superior weapons and better defensive armour of their enemies. For these reasons I have introduced the tunic, mantle, cross gartering, and ringed byrne of the Danes and Anglo-Saxons, between whom it does not appear that any very material difference existed; retaining, however, the peculiarity of the striped and chequered garb, which seems to be generally admitted as belonging to the Scotch long anterior to the history of this play; together with the eagle's feather in the helmet, which, according to Gaelic tradition, was the distinguishing mark of a chieftain. Party-coloured woollens and cloths appear to have been commonly worn amongst the Celtic tribes from a very early period.

‘Diodorus Siculus and Pliny, allude to this peculiarity in their account of the dress of the Belgic Gauls; Strabo, Ptolemy, and Xiphilin, record the dress of Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, as being worn chequer-wise, of many colours, comprising purple, light and dark red, violet and blue.

‘There is every reason to believe that the armour and weapons of the date of Macbeth were of rich workmanship. Harold Hardrada, King of Norway, is described by Snorre, as wearing, in the battle with Harold II., King of England, A.D. 1066, a blue tunic and a splendid helmet. The Norwegians not having expected a battle that day, are said to have been without their coats of mail.

‘This mail appears to have been composed of iron rings or bosses, sewn upon cloth or leather, like that of the Anglo-Saxons. Thorlef, a young Icelandic or Norwegian warrior, of the tenth century, is mentioned in the Eyrbyggja Saga as wearing a most beautiful dress,

and it is also said that his arms and equipments were extremely splendid.

"The seals and monuments of the early kings and nobles of Scotland, represent them as armed and attired in a style similar to their Anglo-Norman contemporaries. Meyrick, in his celebrated work on ancient armour, gives a plate of Alexander I., who commenced his reign in 1107, (only fifty years after the death of Macbeth), and there we find him wearing a hauberk, as depicted in Saxon illuminations, over a tunic of red and blue cloth.

"The Earl of Huntingdon, who succeeded Alexander, under the title of David I., is represented on horseback in his seal, wearing a tunic to the knee, which C. C. H. Smith (one of our most distinguished authorities, to whom I am deeply indebted on this, as on all former occasions), in his work on the ancient costume of England, describes as being party coloured. In the same volume he gives the figure of a Scotch knight of the time of Edward I., 1306, who holds a spear with a leaf-shaped blade. On his head he wears a small skull-cap of steel, like some of the ancient Anglo-Saxon warriors of the eleventh century, and is habited in a surcoat of cloth, descending to the knee, very much resembling a kind of tartan. Siward, Earl of Northumberland, and his son, who, with their followers, were despatched by King Edward the Confessor, to the aid of Malcolm, were equipped in the leather suits called *corium* or *corietum*, which were introduced amongst the Saxons in the ninth century, and are described as having been worn by Earl Harold's soldiers in 1063, in his war with the Welsh. In the "Life of St. Colomba," written in Latin by Adomnan, one of his successors, in the early part of the seventh century, and translated into English by Mr. John Smith, in 1798, we are told that the monks at that time were clothed in the skins of beasts; though

latterly they had woollen stuffs, manufactured by themselves, and linen, probably imported from the Continent. The houses were made of wicker, or wands, woven on stakes, which were afterwards plastered with clay, and when the Abbey of Iona was built of the same rude materials.

"Roderick, King of Strathclyde, is mentioned by Maccange as sleeping on a feather bed about this time; and that even in those primitive ages luxuries were known amongst the great.

"In the four centuries and a half which intervened between the death of St. Colomba and the reign of Macbeth, it is reasonable to presume that considerable improvements took place amongst the Scotch, and that the fashion of their dress and buildings was borrowed from their more civilized neighbours. Under these considerations, the architecture previous to the Norman conquest, has been adopted throughout the entire play. During the five centuries which preceded that event, the Anglo-Saxons made great advances, and erected many castles and churches of considerable importance. They excelled in iron work, and frequently ornamented their buildings with colour. On this subject I have availed myself of the valuable knowledge of George Edwin, Esq., F.S.A., of the Royal Institute of Architects, for whose suggestions I take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations."

The attention of the public was powerfully arrested by this explanatory preface. Had such a document been put forth in the days of Garrick, it would have been more than "*caviare*" to the million, and scarcely less intelligible to the select few. In those days of little inquiry on such matters, no one ever thought of figuring to this mind's eye a portrait of *Macbeth*, in the outward man, divested of a heavy court-suit as stiff as buckram,

of complicated ruffles, and a ponderous wig "of Marlborough's ample fold," confined at first in a tie, but let loose to dangle about the actor's ears and shoulders when he re-entered in consternation from the murder of Duncan. Mr. Kean was anxious to impart his own earnest love of correct illustration to the audience to whom he appealed, and the "Fly-leaf" carried with it the assurance that in any historical play nothing would be introduced except under the sanction of historical authority. From that moment the preface was looked upon as a necessary introduction to the performance and became associated with it, as an interpretation, in the same light in which the Greek chorus elucidates the progress of the classical tragedy. The novelty was speedily copied by those who had never thought of it before, and from imitation passed on to burlesque, in the ordinary course of almost every original idea that obtains popularity and is felt to be instructive.

The system of Shakespearean restoration which Charles Kean had so triumphantly introduced in "King John," he carried, if possible, to a higher degree of perfection in "Macbeth." Encouragement increased effort. Finding his own views so warmly acknowledged by the public, he pursued them with the confidence which success naturally inspires. "Macbeth" ran for twenty weeks, at the rate of three performances per week. No physical strength could endure or render justice to the leading character under more frequent repetition. Throughout the whole of this period, the houses were literally crowded to the roof, and on many evenings hundreds were turned away who could obtain no admittance. The pit entrance was besieged at an early hour, and the old days of dramatic enthusiasm seemed to be revived. In the new arrangement of the play, the text of Shakespeare was most carefully preserved, a few occasional passages only being omitted.

necessary to the action, and lengthening without elating the dialogue. It was deemed desirable to retain the appropriate music of Matthew Lock, which had been so happily composed for, and so long identified in complete harmony with the subject, that it might almost be considered as flowing from the Shakespearean fount. This introduction was still sanctioned, as had ever been before, by general approval. Amongst the chief mechanical novelties we may enumerate the manner in which the apparition of *Banquo* was conceived, the entire arrangement of the witches throughout, particularly in the cauldron scene, which was most picturesquely original; the rude grandeur of the banquet in the third act, and the imposing picture at the close.

Mrs. C. Kean had appeared in London before, as *Lady Macbeth*, and with great success. Her admirable performance astonished all who had been accustomed to associate her more exclusively with the gentler heroines of the stage, and who were scarcely prepared to find the *Titia*, *Portia*, and *Rosalind* of Shakespeare equal to this tremendous incarnation.

As *Macbeth*, Charles Kean had frequently won the admiration and applause of the public during his earlier seasons at the Haymarket. We have already named this character as one of the prominent features of his attraction at that theatre during the season of 1840-1. Since that period, his style, retaining all its inherent energy, had become mellowed by experience, and corrected by study and constant reflection. When the torrent of rage became necessary, he gave vent to it, as before, in an overwhelming burst; but now, another great and perhaps superior attribute presented itself with more marked peculiarity in his general mode of delivery, — a power of condensed energy in repose, with an accompanying clearness of enunciation which renders

the suppressed whisper as impressive as the loud explosion of agony. There is a mastery of art in this which none but the most highly gifted and chosen are able to accomplish. The latter quality is progressively derived from judgment regulated by refined taste; the former springs from the sudden inspiration of genius with the lightning-like rapidity of thought; as the old Greek painter dashed his sponge at the mouth of the horse he was delineating, and at once produced the foam which had so long baffled his imitative skill.

Nothing indicates true genius and conceptive strength more decidedly than the rare faculty of conveying intense passion, without, as Shakespeare says, "tearing it to tatters, to very rags," and splitting the ears of the groundlings with intolerable, unmeaning noise. Deep, concentrated feeling is never loud; but common-place, routine imitators of acting, who feel nothing, are not given to exercise lungs in place of judgment, and to roar unmercifully when, if actually possessed by the simulated rage, nature would render them almost inarticulate. They cannot be made to understand this, and appeal from individual censure to the plaudits of the injudicious and ignorant many, by which their mistakes are too often encouraged. "Can you shout?" was a question once put by a country manager to an ambitious novice. "I rather flatter myself I can," replied he in *Macbeth* in embryo. "Then learn to shout in the right place, and you'll do," was the comforting rejoinder. In this "right place" lies nearly all the mystery it forms a dramatic *pons asinorum* as difficult to surmount as the fifth proposition of Euclid.

On one of the most triumphant repetitions of *Macbeth* at the Princess's, Mr. C. Kean received a compliment equally unexpected and agreeable. Mademoiselle Rachel happened to be present in a private box. He

new that she formed one of the audience, and played
his best in consequence. When the play ended, she
came round to his dressing-room for personal introduc-
tion. Her praises were poured forth with all the ardour
of appreciating genius, and wound up with this enthu-
siastic ebullition, "*Permettez que je vous embrasse.*"
Such a request demanded instant compliance, and the
maternal salute was most cordially exchanged between
the two great artists. The incident recalls a similar one
that happened when Garrick visited Paris. In a
private party at the house of Mademoiselle Clairon, the
rachel of her day, he was asked to gratify the company
by a specimen of his powers. He rose at once, and
gave the dagger soliloquy from "*Macbeth*," without
preparation or arrangement. The spectators were elec-
trified; and Clairon, although unacquainted with the
English language, was so excited by the expressive
action and features, that she caught Garrick in her arms,
and kissed him. Mrs. Garrick, who was present, and
frequently related the story, invariably added, "All
were surprised, but David and I were delighted."

The Easter spectacle for 1853, at the Princess's
Theatre, consisted of a melodrama, entitled, "*Marco
Pada*," very tastefully adapted by Mr. Palgrave Simp-
son, from Scribe's opera of the same name; the music
by Auber being of course omitted. This piece was
infinitely embellished by the introduction of a superb
ball-room scene in the second act. It proved very
successful, and commanded a run of forty-six nights,
continued for thirty-two more after the opening of the
next season.

On Easter Monday, in this year, an important change
took place in theatrical government. Mr. B. Webster
resigned the direction of the Haymarket, which he had
held for sixteen years, and was succeeded by Mr. Buck-

stone; the former gentleman from that time confined himself to the sole superintendence of the Adelphi. Mr. Webster's rule over the Haymarket was eminent, brilliant and successful. The best authors and actors were most liberally paid, and the national drama encouraged with patriotic zeal. In 1844, he offered 500, with contingent advantages, for a prize comedy, to be awarded by a committee, consisting of Messrs. Young, E. R. Moran, Henry Ottley, J. C. Searle, the Rev. Alexander Dyce, and G. P. R. James, with Charles Kemble for chairman. Nearly one hundred plays were sent in, and the palm was awarded to a comedy called "Quid pro Quo; or, the Day of Dupes," by Mrs. G. This was selected simply because it was considered the best of the lot, and not from any estimate of abstract merit. It was coldly received by the public; its short dramatic life seconded but feebly the liberal intention of the manager, and brought no reimbursement to his exchequer.

On the 13th of June, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean selected for their annual benefit Lord Byron's gorgeous tragedy of "Sardanapalus." Such a revival immediately following "Macbeth," and so totally distinct in character and historical epoch, excited public expectation to the highest pitch. The manner in which all new pieces had been produced at the Princess's invested the promise of "Sardanapalus" with unusual interest; and never within the annals of theatrical history was a promise more completely redeemed, or an expected enjoyment more thoroughly surpassed. When the curtain rose, we saw before us the restored palace of *Sennacherib* in embodied reality; and within a few moments the stage became filled with the court and retinue of the Assyrian monarch, who lived 2,400 years ago, as exactly re-animated—"in form and

moving as express and admirable"—as if the sculptures in the British Museum had stepped on to the boards of the theatre by the power of a magician's talisman. We copy the fly-leaf from the bill, which, as in the preceding case of "Macbeth," embraces a programme of the spirit in which the present revival was conceived:—

"In the production of Lord Byron's tragedy of 'Sardanapalus,' I have availed myself of the wonderful discoveries made within the last few years by Layard, Botta, and others, on the site of the ancient Nineveh. It was during the latest excavations made by Mr. Layard, in the south-east palace of the Mount of Nimroud, that our illustrious countryman arrived at the conclusion that this interesting structure was the work of the son of Esarhaddon, who was himself the son of Sennacherib, so famous in sacred history. 'Although,' says Mr. Layard, 'no part of the history of this royal builder has been as yet recovered, still there is every reason to believe that this son of Esarhaddon was no other than the Sardanapalus, who, conquered by the Medes and Babylonians, under Cyaxares (B. C. 806), made one funeral pile of his palace, his wealth, and his wives.'

"To render visible to the eye, in connexion with Lord Byron's drama, the costume, architecture, and domestic manners of the ancient Assyrian people, verified by the bas-reliefs, which, after having been buried for nearly 3,000 years, have in our own day been brought to light, was an object that might well inspire the enthusiasm of one who has learnt that scenic illustration, if it have the weight of authority, may adorn and add dignity to the noblest works of genius.

"I have humbly endeavoured to convey to the stage

an accurate portraiture and a living picture of an age long since past away, but once as famous as our own country for its civilization and power, and more intimately associated with the destructive wars of the Jewish race than any other people. No pains have been spared to present to the eye the gorgeous and striking scenery that has been so unexpectedly dug from the very bowels of the earth. The sculptures now in the British Museum have been rigidly followed; and when recent discovery has failed to give authority for minor detail, I have, wherever it has been possible borrowed designs from surrounding nations flourishing at the same epoch. In decoration of every kind whether scenic or otherwise, I have diligently sought for *truth*; and it is with some pride and satisfaction I am enabled to announce that a verdict of approval has been received from the judge (Mr. Layard) most competent to speak with decision upon the surpassingly interesting subject with which I have had to deal.

"It is hardly necessary to remind the reader, that Assyria and the country beyond the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, constituted, if not actually the cradle of mankind, at all events the theatre on which the descendants of Noah performed their first conspicuous part. The plains of Shinar witnessed not only the defeat of that presumptuous enterprise which scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth, but also the exploits of the 'mighty hunter,' and the triumph of his ambition, in the establishment of the first monarchy recorded either by sacred or profane writers.

" 'More than 2,000 years' (says a modern writer, recording the marvellous results of French and English discovery on the Assyrian plains) 'had Nineveh lain in its unknown grave, when a wandering English scholar, and a French *savant*, urged by a noble inspiration

sought the seat of the once powerful empire, and searching until they found the dead city, threw off its shroud of sand and ruin, and revealed once more to an astonished and curious world, the temples, the palaces, and the idols, the representations of war, and the triumphs of peaceful art, of the ancient Assyrians. The Nineveh of Scripture—the Nineveh of the oldest historians—the Nineveh, twin sister of Babylon, glorying in a civilization of pomp and power, all traces of which were believed to be gone—the Nineveh in which the captive tribes of Israel had laboured and wept, was, after a sleep of twenty centuries, again brought to light. The long lost was found—the dead palaces were exhumed—the strange, huge sculptures were dug out, and their inscriptions were deciphered. The proofs of ancient splendour were again beheld by living eyes; and by the skill of the draughtsman and the pen of the antiquarian travellers, made known to the world. Patience and industry rescued from the earth these treasures of a long gone people, giving proof of a great civilization existing in the earliest stages of the history of the human race.’

“It is a noteworthy fact, that, until the present moment, it has been impossible to render Lord Byron’s tragedy of ‘Sardanapalus’ upon the stage with proper dramatic effect, because, until now we have known nothing of Assyrian architecture and costume. It is also deserving of remark, that, interesting as the bas-reliefs which have furnished such information are, they could not find dramatic illustration but for the existence of the only tragedy that has reference to the period of which they treat. I consider myself fortunate in having been permitted to link together the momentous discoveries of one renowned Englishman with the poetic labours of another.

“Lord Byron having closely followed the history of

Sardanapalus, as given by Diodorus Siculus, who has erroneously placed the site of the ancient Nineveh on the banks of the Euphrates, I have ventured to alter the text where this mistake is made, and have given the city its proper position on the river Tigris."

The late discoveries on the banks of the far-famed river having created for Assyria and its capital an unexpected interest, Charles Kean, prompted by a true classical mind, and an inborn love of historical illustration, seized upon the opportunity that presented itself while yet the newly imported relics were a topic of general conversation, with the tact of a skilful general and the taste of an accomplished artist. The subject and the time fortuitously harmonized. "Sardanapalus" had been acted at Drury Lane in 1834, under the management of Mr. Bunn, on which occasion Macready personated the effeminate monarch. It was not one of his happy assumptions. With the exception of the dream in the fourth act, his powers appeared to slumber through an uncongenial part. There was some correspondence as to the heroine being supported by Miss Mardyn, a very beautiful woman, who had long retired from the stage, but had never risen beyond an actress of moderate ability even when in her prime. Her name, in earlier days, had been, in something of a questionable shape, mixed up with that of the noble author, and it was said that she had supplied the model from which he drew his fair Ionian slave. But the report of her re-appearance subsided into air, while the play itself made little impression, and was withdrawn after a few unprofitable repetitions. The time for its successful production had not arrived. The coming disinterment of Nineveh within the next twenty years had cast long shadows before, neither were the wonderful sculptures of

the British Museum, the accumulated treasures of individual enterprise and sagacity, yet gazed upon by daily myriads. Lord Byron declared repeatedly, in conversation, in letters, and in print, that his tragedies were not composed with the most remote view to the stage—that they were neither intended for, nor suited to representation; and exclaimed loudly against Elliston's immolation of "*Marino Faliero*." He even applied for an injunction to restrain future attempts, but without success. Having served on the committee of Drury Lane, he was well acquainted with the managers and actors of his day. He had no great opinion either of their taste or discrimination, disliked to be fettered by their caprices, and, above all, dreaded the ordeal of a mixed audience. He may have been sincere to a certain extent; but we suspect there was both fencing and coquetry in some part of his objections. Why did he write in the dramatic form, if he repudiated the legitimate exercise of that style of composition? The essential and characteristic ingredient of a play is *action*—"Something," as Jeffrey says in the *Edinburgh Review*, "supposed to pass before the eyes of the assembled spectators." We have known many dramatic authors, but we never yet encountered one who considered it a compliment to be told that his play was more fit for the closet than the stage—that it read better than it would act. He is almost as well pleased with the qualifying distinction as an actor is when an influential critic calls his performance of a pet part, respectable. That a play should be written for the express purpose of not being acted, sounds very like a pre-determined contradiction. It seems almost as inconceivable as that a dinner should be cooked not to be eaten—a song composed not to be sung—a book printed not to be read—a coat made not to be worn—or a house

built not to be inhabited. Had Lord Byron lived to see "Sardanapalus" placed on the stage as it was at the Princess's Theatre, he would have altered his opinion, and must have admitted, from proved experiment, that his tragedy contains all the leading elements of dramatic success—action, dialogue, incident, interest, and catastrophe; not forgetting what he himself calls the "law of literature throughout the more civilized parts of the world," and still fondly cherished by a few rigidly classical enthusiasts—a strict observance of the Aristotelean unities. He would have been taught, too, that the tribunal he so earnestly prayed deliverance from, is never slow to acknowledge the supremacy of genius, when clothed in appropriate garb, and attended by its indispensable auxiliaries.

In spite of all that exploded bigotry and prejudice have attempted to set forth to the contrary, the stage, as it presents a combination of the ornamental arts, will ever, when properly administered, be considered the most improving as well as the most intellectual of civilized recreations. We see there placed before us, in actual existence, the animated reality of what we can otherwise only become acquainted with through the cold medium of description. The genius of the poet, aided by the executive talent of the actor, recalls the buried ages of the past, and brings them in review before us with a living reality which mere reading or relation could never impart. We think profitably, and acquire useful lessons in the study, but we live over again in the theatre. "The drama," as Lord Bacon justly observes, "is as a history brought before the eyes; it exhibits the image of things as if they were present, while history treats of them as entirely extinct." Plato wished the virtue could assume a visible form. Dramatic representation gives one both to virtue and to vice. It se

worth models for admiration and abhorrence ; and as example is better than precept, the moral thus presented affords the benefit of both at once.

Many who had taught themselves to believe, or had been drilled into a conviction, that the modern stage is in a state of decline, and that we live under the lower empire of theatrical taste, began to dismiss their preconceived notions, and to repent of a long-cherished heresy, as they witnessed and felt the gradual effect of these unprecedented revivals. Where one person formerly enjoyed the lights of knowledge, and admitted the impulses of refinement, a thousand now possess the advantages which were denied to their grandfathers. But his general advance of education has added new difficulties to the dramatic art. The appetite of the public is much more craving and more difficult to satisfy than it was fifty or even twenty years ago. The present age is eminently pictorial, and in the embellishment of a play, the most costly accessories are now indispensable which formerly were never required. Errors or deficiencies of costume and general decoration, which in the days of Garrick and under the management of the Kembles were passed without notice, are now watched and scrutinized with the most jealous criticism. The very cavillers who cry out upon superabundant ornament, would be the first to carp and exclaim if that salient object of their censure should either be modified or withdrawn.

"Sardanapalus," as revived by Charles Kean, comprised a subject for reflective study, from which the most careless spectator might derive profitable information and ennobling thoughts. His own performance of the last descendant of Semiramis was marked by the truth, energy, and variety which distinguish his ablest conceptions. The Assyrian monarch is a sanguine voluptuary, without being constitutionally unfeeling or

effeminate ; a royal sensualist, who enjoys life while he dallies with death ; who rushes from the banquet-table to the battle-field with the careless gaiety of a disciple of Epicurus, and rises into a hero under the pressure of circumstances, without effort or parade. The terrible grandeur of his self-sacrifice would be incredible, nay, almost unnatural, did we not believe it to be true. In sociable qualities, and in good temper, he bears a striking resemblance to our own Charles II., while he soars far beyond him in inherent magnanimity. We feel interested in his fate from the beginning ; he retains our sympathy to the end, and we mourn sincerely over his fall. We almost forgive his inconstancy to his Queen for the touching kindness and self-reproaches of their parting interview.

Myrrha, the Ionian captive, is a beautiful introduction, forming the chief charm and relieving feature of the drama. Utterly unselfish, and devoted to the King from personal affection, she uses her influence over him for the most ennobling purposes, appearing more like a guardian genius than an earthly lover, striving to win him from his fatal course, while she soothes and adorns its appalling close. The feminine softness and devotion of the character, so heroically blended with Grecian pride and courage, were portrayed by Mrs. C. Kean with all her accustomed taste and nice discrimination. Miss Heath enacted the single scene, in which the *Queen Zarina* appears, with dignity and feeling. Some frigid critics have condemned this affecting episode as unnecessary and inappropriate. In our humble judgment we think it as opposite to both as language can express and if the excited feelings of an audience are to be admitted as evidence on the question, we can appeal to them strongly in support of the impression produced. The stern soldier, but faithful friend and subject

Alcemenes, stood prominently forth in the hands of Mr. Ryder, and formed throughout an admirable contrast to the amiable thoughtlessness of *Sardanapalus*. Lord Byron himself imagined that the character of his regal hero approached the comic; a strange fantasy, for which we profess ourselves unable to discover the slightest foundation.

In the acting version of this noble drama all the subordinate parts were filled by careful and judicious representatives. Every line was distinctly and characteristically uttered. The curtailments necessary to bring the play, as originally written, within reasonable acting length, tended greatly to increase and condense its dramatic force. It is difficult to make selections from a whole so skilfully blended together; but we may name three leading effects, as surpassing in truthful display anything we had ever until then seen attempted on the stage:—the procession which introduced the entry of *Sardanapalus*, in the first act; the banquet and dance in the hall of *Nimrod* in the third; and the conflagration of the palace and city, which closed the fifth.

Those of our readers who are acquainted with the mechanism of a theatre will readily understand that the late wonderful exhibition was produced more by artificial means, than through the agency of real fire—an element so dangerous to employ to any extent. Many of the audience, however, sat in mingled admiration and terror. On the first night, an old half-pay colonel, in the stalls, was overheard by his neighbour saying to himself, "Oh! hang it! this is too much. Kean is going beyond the mark this time—he will certainly burn the theatre down." He then looked round to observe the effect on the assembled house, and continued—"There'll be a rush to the doors in a moment, and lives may be lost;

but I shall keep my seat, come what may, until they are all out."

The insurance companies took the alarm, and sent their officers to make a strict investigation. The mystery was explained to them, and on the next night they were posted in a convenient corner of the stage, from whence they could witness the entire operation. But when the flames burst forth, the pit began to sink, and what appeared to be blazing rafters and showers of fire descended from the roof of the palace, they made a precipitate retreat, exclaiming that they were perfectly satisfied.

The unusual attraction of the Assyrian tragedy stimulated a corresponding amount of the never-wanting ridicule which dogs the steps of successful management according to the received London practice. Such opportunities are tempting, and not likely to be passed over as long as the public encourage what it would be better taste to condemn. Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and "Merchant of Venice" had been very recently degraded to travesty; why then should Lord Byron be spared? Two burlesques on "Sardanapalus" appeared within a week of each other, at different theatres, whilst the original, at the Princess's, was in the first glow of its attraction. The "Fly-leaf," again, was considered too good to escape, and furnished food for more extensive parody.

If there be any truth in spirit-rapping, and the dead are really cognizant of, and take an interest in the everyday occurrences of the life they have left, we wish some specially-gifted medium would charm up Lord Byron, and inquire of him how he feels as to the stage treatment of his dramatic works. To the last hour of his existence, he protested against their being acted. Even of "Werner," he said in the preface, "The whole is therein intended, nor in any shape adapted, for the stage."

We wish it were possible to ask him, for what conceivable reason a professed author dramatizes a popular novel, unless with a conviction of its fitness for representation.

A highly successful season at the Princess's terminated with the sixty-first representation of Lord Byron's *Werner*; which, on the re-opening in the following October, was again resumed, and continued for thirty-two additional nights. During the season which ended on the 2d September, 1853, the "Corsican Brothers" commanded fifty-five full houses. The only light novelty produced was a piece, in one act, entitled, "Hesterfield Thinskin" (an adaptation from the French, by Mr. Maddox), which came out in the beginning of August, and ran to the last night. The total number of pieces acted, during a season of rather more than eleven months, amounted to thirty. Of these, seven only, including the pantomime, were entirely new. Three old farces, the "Spitalfields Weaver," "Bombastes," and "Deaf as a Post," were revived for Mr. Wright, who seceded from the company when the season ended. "Black-eyed Susan" was played during a three-weeks' engagement of T. P. Cooke, before Christmas. We rejoice to see that this the truest representative of the British tar of Nelson's day, who ever stepped from the quarter-deck to the boards, is still rated on the theatrical books, and has lately danced his inimitable hornpipe, with as much vigour as he displayed when we first had the pleasure of his acquaintance—more years ago than we feel disposed to chronicle. Without envying him his activity, we sincerely wish we were able to emulate it.

CHAPTER IV.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MR. CHARLES KEAN AND MR. DOUGLAS JERROLD—MR. BLANCHARD JERROLD'S STATEMENT IN HIS FATHER'S LIFE—REASONS FOR PUBLISHING THE LETTERS—THEIR TENDENCY AND RESULT—INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS.

DURING the year 1853, from April to October, an interchange of letters took place between Mr. Charles Kean and the late Mr. Douglas Jerrold, entirely confined to certain dramatic arrangements pending between them and as yet imperfectly carried out. It was not intended in the present biography, to refer to this correspondence or to the permanent hostility thereby engendered in Mr. Jerrold's mind towards Mr. Kean in his double capacity as manager and actor. The matter had been forgotten by the public; Mr. Douglas Jerrold was dead and Mr. Kean would never have permitted any allusion to, or revival of the ungracious subject, had not Mr. Blanchard Jerrold so unnecessarily (shall we add, imprudently and indelicately?) raked up its ashes in the recent life of his father. In that work he has thought proper to republish a most virulent article from *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* of October the 15th, 1854, on the production of the "Heart of Gold."

We step a little onward in the order of time, to insert the article here, as necessary to a clear understanding of what follows:—

"'A HEART OF GOLD' AT THE PRINCESS'S.

"For obvious reasons, 'A Heart of Gold' is no subject for criticism in this journal. A few facts, however,

er, may be given by the author in this his farewell to all dramatic doings. The piece was written some years since, at the solicitation of Mr. Charles Kean, and duly paid for. The hero and heroine were to be acted by himself and Mrs. Charles Kean. They were, in fact, written to be so acted.

Subsequently, however, Mr. Kean's tragic claims were questioned in a wicked publication called *Punch*: and the actor himself graphically rendered in certain of his many moods of dramatic inspiration. Whereupon, Mr. Charles Kean broke his compact with the author of 'A Heart of Gold;' he would not play his hero, but find a substitute. A new cast of characters was proposed, against which the author gave his written protest. But Mr. Charles Kean had, in 1850, bought the drama; and, therefore, in his own mercantile way, conceived that in 1854 he had a right to do what he liked with his own black-and-white 'nigger.' The author thought differently, and stood to his protest. Despite of which, however, on the close of last season, Mr. Charles Kean's solicitor informed the author's solicitor (there is parchment on Parnassus!) that 'A Heart of Gold' would be produced at the commencement of the present season. To this no answer was made. The author had once protested, and that he thought sufficient to Mr. Kean and to himself. Nevertheless, the piece was put into rehearsal; and yet the author had *no notice of the fact*. Perhaps Mr. Kean thought the author might spontaneously send his solicitor to superintend the rehearsals, who, with Mr. Kean's solicitor, would settle writs of error as to readings, misapprehensions, and so forth. Had the author done so, even under such professional revision, there had doubtless been fewer misdemeanours against nature, good taste, and propriety.

"Yet it is under such wilful injuries committed by management that a drama is, nevertheless, to be buoyant. It is through such a fog of player's brain that the intention of the author is to shine clearly forth. With a certain graceful exception, there never was so much bluff acting as in 'A Heart of Gold.' Nevertheless—according to the various printed reports—the piece asserted vitality, though drugged and stabbed, and hit about the head, as only some players *can* hit a play—hard and remorselessly.

"In a word, against the author's protest of misrepresentation, was his play flung, huddled upon the stage, without a single stage revision allowed on his part. Solicitors have been alluded to, but it should be stated, legal interference was first employed by the author for his self-security. He would have no written or personal communication with an individual who had violated the confidence of honourable minds by printing 'for private circulation only' private letters; let us say that—had the writer's consent been, as is usual in such cases, demanded—might, for him, have been posted in market-places. It was in consequence of this madness, that the author, in subsequent correspondence, employed a solicitor. For, in the writer's mind it requires a very nice casuistry to discover the difference between picking the confidence of a private letter and picking a lock. To be sure, there is this difference in the penalties: in one case we employ a policeman in the other contempt."

The above notice, Mr. Blanchard Jerrold duly verifies as coming from the pen of his father, and endorses it with his own opinion in the following words:—

"This farewell was written in the most natural manner."

ess of spirit, and it is only because I know it to be
st, that I print it."

Here is a direct challenge, and silence now would assuredly be misconstrued into an admission of weakness. Under a combined battery of detraction and ridicule, poured upon him for many successive months in two widely circulated papers, Mr. Kean remained perfectly passive. Many of his friends wondered at this, and urged him to reply. But he was too good a general to commit such an error, and too prudent to engage an enemy on his own ground with his own weapons. He would not give that enemy the triumph of seeing him wince; and experience had taught him that a public man gains nothing by impatience under attack. He had neither time nor inclination for newspaper controversy. He felt that he had a great majority on his side, and was satisfied with that conviction. He knew, moreover, that the public take little interest in personal disputes, beyond the momentary excitement and pleasure of a squabble of any kind, with the hope and expectation of its winding up, after the usual mode, with the club logic of the worthy sergeant in "Tom Jones." "Craving your pardon, Sir," says Partridge, "that's a *non sequitur*." "You're another, if you come to that," retorts the sergeant; "and I'll fight *any man* for a crown."

That Mr. Kean *did* circulate amongst his friends the correspondence between Mr. Douglas Jerrold and himself, is as certain as that he had just cause for so doing. The immediate provocation was a notice of "Faust and Marguerite," that appeared in *Punch* of the 6th of May, 1854; and was copied into *Lloyd's* of the 7th. This article, being too long for insertion here, will be found in the Appendix. We refer to it as an exemplar of the series, and as a literary curiosity, showing how

weakly a clever man can write when he suffers rational criticism to be superseded by personal acrimony.

Mr. Kean was driven to the course he adopted, in self-defence, to explain what was otherwise an unintelligible mystery, and to let the truth be known to his own circle, as it actually occurred. Such critical notices as those indited by Mr. Douglas Jerrold manifestly deft themselves; but, although the *animus* which dictates them may be transparent, many are inclined to ask, "Why is this so? and what can Mr. Kean have done to provoke such pertinacious hostility?" Perhaps a solution lies in the subjoined correspondence.

There is not a syllable in these letters intended or implied, in the most remote degree, by either writer, to be of a private or confidential nature. They treat exclusively of matters of business, as the negotiation by which a house is leased, or an interchange of property effected between contracting parties. They are as available for evidence, in case of litigation, as a bill of exchange or an attested account. No sophistry can subject them to any other interpretation. The attempt is ridiculous. If a common jury, or a special court of honour, could be assembled to consider such a charge, they would throw it out in scorn without a moment's deliberation.

When the relations and friends of Mr. Douglas Jerrold, with a natural bias by which we are all more or less influenced, seek to represent him as a man of philanthropic soul and kindly sympathies, of benevolent heart and social affections, of brilliant wit, playful but unwounding, of vast conversational powers and unlimited scope of intellect, of gentle temper and happy disposition,—it falls not within the province of a stranger to dispute the fidelity of the picture. But when, to complete this eulogium, facts and inferences are assumed, injurious to the character of another us-

tice casts aside reserve, and demands truth. The dealings of public men, in their professional capacities, are extensively canvassed and claimed as legitimate subjects of discussion. Conclusions are often drawn from very imperfect information. If, in the present case, on a full statement, public opinion should be less favourable to his father's memory than Mr. Blanchard Jerrold may desire or anticipate, he must remember that he alone has evoked the subject, and has no one but himself to blame for the result.

The writer of these pages, in speaking freely here and in other places, of Mr. Kean's thoughts and opinions with regard to the transactions referred to, begs to have it understood explicitly that he was, and had been for many years, in daily, he may say in hourly communication with him. He knew every turn of his mind, and reflected the impression of his feelings almost as faithfully as he retained them himself.

The "Correspondence" with Mr. Jerrold will tell its own story; but a few preliminary observations are necessary, to render the questions it involves sufficiently intelligible. Two three-act dramas had been purchased by Mr. Kean from Mr. Jerrold, in 1851;—the "Heart of Gold," and "St. Cupid; or, Dorothy's Fortune." For each of these, 300*l.*, the sum agreed on had been paid to the author on delivery of the respective manuscripts. It was intended that the first should take its due precedence in representation; but it was mutually agreed, in consequence of incidental circumstances, that the order of acting should be inverted, and the second supersede the first. In the meantime (in April, 1852), Mr. Jerrold proposed to Mr. Kean a treaty for a third drama. This Mr. Kean was unwilling to enter into, having already two in hand, paid for but not acted. In the course of the conversation, Mr. Jerrold stated that

he was urgently in want of money, upon which M. Kean at once adopted his views, and advanced him 100 on account of the suggested play. This sum Mr. Jerrol afterwards considered as a loan, and repaid with the accruing interest on the 28th of April, 1853.

It has been seen that the comedy of "St. Cupid" having been previously played at Windsor Castle in selection of her Majesty, was produced at the Princess in January, 1853. It was well received and frequently repeated, but, as a commercial venture, the manager found himself out of pocket to a large amount, without including the purchase money. Early in the year preceding, 1852, Mr. Douglas Jerrold, in addition to his literary connexion with *Punch*, had become the avowed editor of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, one of the most extensively circulated publications of the class in the metropolis. That paper had always, in its theatrical criticisms, expressed the most flattering opinions of M. C. Kean in his professional capacity; and the friendly spirit suffered no change under the new editorship until the progress of the correspondence now to be produced. Nothing could be more complimentary than the articles on the "Trial of Love," "Anne Blake," and other less important novelties. Of "Macbeth" we find its notice, on the 20th of February, 1853:—

"'Macbeth,' played at the Princess's on Monday night, is a marvellous triumph of scenic and mechanical art. We shall not attempt to describe all its glories, or all its scenic effects. We would as soon endeavour with pen and ink to paint a rainbow on our paper, or to give the glowing colours of aameleon. Suffice it, that this is a magnificent triumph for the management, and will reward Mr. C. Kean with golden opinions, and—what he may think quite as good—golden assets."

Of Sardanapalus, in the paper of the 12th of June, a more elaborate panegyric runs thus :—

“That one performance gave us a better insight into the manners and habits of the Assyrians, than a whole lifetime has enabled us to acquire of the French. It was a grand lesson of animated geography; and the more curious, as being the animated geography of a nation that is dead. Mr. Charles Kean has been the noble teacher on this occasion, and he cannot be praised too highly for the generous spirit in which he has carried out and illustrated his pleasant teaching. He has done his work like a magician. With his managerial rod he has made Nineveh spring out of the pages of Mr. Layard’s monumental book, and to become endowed with all the awe and grandeur of the living thing. He has built a new empire upon the stage; the result is something to remember for life. We have never seen anything so perfect on the modern stage, and it certainly is a great honour to the theatre that has produced it; an honour that has not only been honourably gained by the prodigality that has been showered, as profusely as the golden shower of fire in the last scene, upon its production, but likewise by the refined taste that, aided by Mr. Layard, has presided over it. Two great qualities manifest themselves throughout—the feeling of a poet, and the pocket of a prince; and we need not say how rarely it is that you meet with either the one or the other, much less a combination of the two, in a manager now-a-days. To finish, it is a joy to us to confess that, for many years to come, ‘Sardanapalus’ will be a beautiful picture to hang up in the long, dreary halls of our dramatic recollections; a beautiful picture we shall always be able to look back to with increased pleasure.”

Those who are curious in such matters, if they turn over the pages of *Punch* of about the same period, or a little later, will find this identical picture grossly caricatured by the same hand, which may supply them with materials for profitable meditation; and in *Lloyd's* of September the 11th, 1853, the earlier opinion of "Macbeth" assumes an altered tone, difficult to understand without a clue:—

"Macbeth has been reproduced at Sadler's Wells, with all the original effects of 1847. These are the same effects which Mr. C. Kean made such liberal use of last season, for his version at the Princess's. They are in every respect as effective as the latter, and have the still further merit of being produced the first."

In a subsequent article, on the 6th of November, we find this general summary:—"Play-going at the Princess's is *sight-seeing*, and nothing more; and a visit is invariably accompanied by the *ennui* that accompanies sight-seeing." The current in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* began to turn into the hostile channel after the notice on Sardanapalus in June, and very speedily settled down into unmitigated invective. The squibs and caricatures in *Punch* had taken long precedence; but as *Punch* lashes everybody and everything, Charles Kean had, at least, the satisfaction there of being ridiculed in good company.

A notice of Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's book, in *John Bull*, of February 26th, 1859, says: "The abuse of Mr. Kean (in *Punch*) was marked (if we are not mistaken) by a character of malevolence quite alien from the ordinary tone of dramatic censure. In fact, Mr. Jerrold's attacks on Mr. Kean had commenced long before this, when the former was a contributor to the

Morning Herald, and the latter was just rising into fame as an actor of mark. They commenced, too, immediately after a play of Jerrold's had been declined at the Haymarket Theatre, in consequence, as he conjectured, of Mr. Kean's repugnance to undertaking one of the characters in it."*

Having now cleared the way by explanatory notes, we proceed to introduce the correspondence :—

“ *To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.*

“ 3, Torrington Square,
“ 26th April, 1853.

“ MY DEAR MR. JERROLD,—

“ I have been expecting, according to your promise, to hear from you respecting the Nautical Drama we talked about. It is now nearly twelve months since I advanced you 100*l.* in anticipation of a new piece, and I am naturally anxious to ascertain that something is in progress. I wish the drama to be in my possession before the close of the present season ; and feel satisfied that the subject is one that, with the aid of your genius, will prove successful. Requesting an early reply,

“ I remain,

“ Yours very truly,

“ CHARLES KEAN.”

“ *To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.*

“ Circus Road, St. John's Wood,
“ 26th April, 1853.

“ MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“ Our arrangement for another drama had no reference to a ‘ Nautical ’ drama ; that was an after-propo-

* There is a mistake here. When Mr. Kean was acting at the Haymarket and long before he had any idea of entering on management, Mr. D. Jerrold proposed to him to purchase a play of his, called (we believe) the “ Spendthrift,” which Mr. Kean declined.

sition on your part, that I thought had wholly passed away with the late Easter. Nevertheless, our original agreement I will, at your wish, fully cancel. My thoughts have reverted to the first subject, which shall be, or shall *not*, as you elect,

"If you think the nautical drama available, I shall, notwithstanding, be very glad to give my notion of the matter to a gentleman who, I believe, would do full justice to the subject.

"Yours sincerely,
"D. JERROLD."

"To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

"27th April, 1853.

"MY DEAR MR. JERROLD,—

"I do not quite understand your reply to my note. It is perfectly true that you suggested to me a subject for a two-act drama about a twelvemonth since, when you asked for an advance of 100*l*. I immediately let you have that sum, at no small inconvenience to myself, as you stated you were at the time much pressed for money; without entering into any very detailed understanding with you respecting the piece, beyond the fact that you were to accomplish it during the theatrical vacation, *which* portion of your agreement, I need not remind you, was not fulfilled. Having at the time in my possession two three-act pieces from your pen, for which I had paid you the full amount, namely, 300*l*. for each, it stands to reason I did not then require a *third*, and was only actuated by a kindly feeling and a desire to *oblige* you.

"When I applied to you on the subject of a nautical drama, not having heard a word from you in the interim, on the original subject named, I did so, intend-

ing this should be in lieu of the one first mentioned. You now tell me that you will either cancel the original subject, or go on with it, as I may wish ; and at the same time infer that you decline writing the nautical piece.

“ Handing over the subject in question, as you now propose to do, to another author, is of course not to be thought of. If I wished another to undertake the work, I could find that author myself. I wish *your* aid for the nautical drama, which, if carried out as we agreed upon, I feel would have much more attraction than the subject originally proposed by you. I am quite willing to avail myself of your offer, and cancel the original understanding. If you will, however, finish (as you promised to do) the nautical drama in three acts, introducing the stage effects we talked of, I will give you an additional 200*l.* to the 100*l.* you have already received. If this arrangement does not meet your views, you will oblige me by returning the 100*l.* I have advanced. Let me have your answer without delay ; and believe me,

“ Yours truly,

“ CHARLES KEAN.”

“ *To* CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

“ 26, Circus Road, St. John's Wood,

“ 28th April, 1853.

“ MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“ Herewith I return you the 100*l.* advanced last April, I think, within a day or two of the present date. Under the circumstances, and to make the matter a purely commercial one between us, you must permit me, in deference to my own self-respect, to add to the 100*l.* the twelvemonth's interest, at five per cent. It is very true, that, desiring to comply with your wish, so earnestly expressed, I did waive the subject upon which you advanced the money, and consented, with no plea-

sure to myself, for I have had enough of nautical pieces by which fortunes have been made by others, and comparatively twopence-halfpenny by your humble servant; nevertheless, I did consent to handle oakum once more for the Princess's. But this arrangement, as I have said, passed away into thin Easter air with your new Easter drama. My thoughts have since been occupied with the previous subject, However, no harm is done. I might, were it permissible to a writer, a mere writer, to complain about anything, I might, perhaps, venture a slight murmur of disappointment, that my first drama, written for your first season, remains unacted in your third. I might complain, but will be dumb as an oyster, and nevertheless

“Yours truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

“*To* DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

“3, Torrington Square,

“28th April, 1853.

“MY DEAR MR. JERROLD,—

“I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your cheque for 105*l.* in return for the 100*l.* I advanced you last April, the additional 5*l.* being interest for the same.

“Of course I have no answer to make to your remarks concerning ‘the fortunes that have been made by others and the comparatively twopence-halfpenny by you,’ on account of your former nautical pieces, beyond reminding you that my offer was 300*l.* for a drama of the kind, being the same sum you have asked and received from me, for a three-act play and a three-act comedy.

“In reply to your concluding remarks, that you might perhaps venture a slight murmur of disappointment that your first drama, written for me, had not yet

been acted, you must permit me to remind you that you were put fully in possession by me of the unfortunate position of affairs between * * * and myself; and appeared from your tone, not only to sympathise with me, but also to appreciate the motives that induced me to put it aside. Indeed, as you well knew at the time, I had no alternative.

"Afterwards, it was *at your own express desire* that 'St. Cupid' should be brought out *first*, should I be fortunate enough to have it selected for representation at Windsor Castle.

"I cannot but feel that you must have forgotten our various conversations, or you would not now urge against me a complaint which has no foundation in justice.

"I have endeavoured to do all in my power that is right and kind by you, and if I have failed in conveying that impression to your mind, I can only express my very great regret.

"Truly yours,

"CHARLES KEAN."

"To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

"26, Circus Road, St. John's Wood,

"29th April, 1853.

"MY DEAR MR. KEAN.

"Pray believe me that I make no complaint whatever of the postponement of the piece during your junction with * * *. It was necessary, and I felt that you were hardly placed. But, when we parted at the conclusion, or some time before the conclusion of last season, it was certainly my impression that you proposed to *open* the present season with the first drama. Something mocks my memory, if you did not on that

occasion observe,—‘then you’ll have *two* pieces next season.’ But let this pass. Your offer for the nautical piece is liberal; and it is by no means of *your* terms I should think to complain. What I mean is, the recollection of the scurvy treatment I received where the largest success accrued to others, makes nautical dramas particularly repugnant to me, though I should certainly have written the piece for Easter; and for this simple reason, I had promised to do so. Your arrangements took another form.

“For myself, in this matter, I part in perfect good temper; for, as I have said, there is, I hope, no harm done.

“Yours very truly,

“DOUGLAS JERROLD.”

“To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

“3, Torrington Square,

“30th April, 185

“MY DEAR MR. JERROLD,—

“You are, so far, quite correct in stating that it was at one time, my intention to commence the present season with your drama. Afterwards, however, when ‘*St. Cupid*’ had been selected for representation at the Court Theatricals, I suggested to you the policy of allowing that comedy to be first performed at the Princess’s, as any previous production of yours in the same season might, in some degree, mar the *éclat* which would result under the unprecedented circumstances, probably attending ‘*St. Cupid*.’ You perfectly coincided with my opinion, and expressed your desire that ‘*St. Cupid*’ should be first performed; therefore what has been done receives your sanction and approval, and you surely are not justified in the complaint you have made against me. In answer to what you state respecting ‘the nautical

drama," it is perfectly true that, when I first submitted the matter to you, it was with a view to *Easter* ; but in an after conversation between us, while sitting together on the bench adjoining Massingham's Office, it was agreed to relinquish the original intention with regard to *Easter* (for various reasons which I need not now enumerate), and you left me with a promise that you would write me a drama on the subject named. I was certainly impressed with the feeling that it was as much a bargain between us, as if there had existed a written contract to that effect.

"Yours truly,

"CHARLES KEAN."

"To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

"26, Circus Road, St. John's Wood,

"May 17th, 1853.

"MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

"Will you favour me by letting me know if it be your intention to produce my play of the 'Heart of Gold' next season.

"Yours truly,

"DOUGLAS JERROLD."

"To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

"May 18th, 1853.

"MY DEAR MR. JERROLD,—

"In all our business transactions I have never failed to consult your wishes, and am equally disposed to do so now. Tell me explicitly what you desire respecting the 'Heart of Gold,' and it shall be carried out in every point, if practicable.

"Yours truly,

"CHARLES KEAN."

To this letter Mr. Jerrold sent no reply.

" To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

" August 24th, 1853.

" DEAR SIR,

" As I infer, from your late correspondence with me, that you are anxious your play of the ' Heart of Gold ' should be produced without delay, I have determined, whatever may be the inconvenience to myself, to make it one of the earliest novelties of my next season.

" As we close on Friday week, 2d September, it will be necessary that the drama should be read, and the parts distributed, before that date.

" In the absence of Mr. Wright, who leaves my theatre, I purpose giving the part of *Michaelmas* to Mr. Harley ; Mrs. Walter Lacy will play *Molly Dindle* ; Mr. Ryder, the part of *John Dymond* ; and the rest of the characters will be cast according to the ability of the company.

" Perhaps you will so far oblige me, as to name the day (Saturday excepted), on which you will read the piece.

" I remain, yours faithfully,

" CHARLES KEAN."

" To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

" 26, Circus Road, St. John's Wood

" August 25th.

" DEAR SIR,—

" Probably I may be enabled to relieve you of the drama of the ' Heart of Gold.' To the cast you propose I *cannot consent*. In the event of finding another theatre, are you disposed, the money being repaid, to return the drama to

" Yours faithfully,

" D. JERROLD."

“ *To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.*

“ 25th August, 1853.

‘ DEAR SIR,—

“ I will meet your wishes, and immediately return the play of the ‘Heart of Gold,’ if you will refund me 300*l*. I have paid you for it.

“ I do so under the conviction that no good can accrue to any party concerned in its production at my theatre, where a hostile and malicious feeling exists, on the part of the author, towards the person and management of the man to whom it is entrusted.*

“ As I quit London on the 3d September, perhaps you will be good enough to acquaint me with your determination respecting the re-purchase before that date.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ CHARLES KEAN.”

“ *To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.*

“ August 30th.

‘ DEAR SIR,—

“ I do not return to London until the end of September. I will then, should I find my drama available elsewhere, of which I have little doubt, re-purchase it of you. Of course, you cannot forget that you applied to *me* to write the piece. I never sought *you*; the parts were written for Mrs. Kean and yourself, and accepted with much laudation. After three seasons you propose a most damaging alteration of cast^e du break your compact. Be it so.

“ And now, dear Sir, as to ‘the hostile and malicious feeling’ you attribute to me as regards your ‘person

* This is in reference to the repeated attacks made upon Mr. C. Kean in *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* and *Punch*. They must be read to convey an understanding of their full virulence.

and management,' I can believe that your habits may not enable you to perceive the ill manners and the injustice of such an unsupported imputation. Neither hostility nor malice exist in me towards you or your doings. You would probably think it very rude in me were I, because you have broken faith with me, to stigmatize you as a person vain, capricious, unstable in his agreements, with a festering anxiety to consider every man his mortal enemy, who is not prepared to acknowledge him the eighth wonder of the habitable world.

"I feel almost certain that you would think this very rude in me. Therefore, be more chary of your imputations of malice and hostility towards

"Yours faithfully,

"DOUGLAS JERROLD."

"To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

"August 31st, 1853.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I wish to pass over that portion of your letter (received this morning) intended to be offensive, and confine myself to saying that, throughout our transactions, I have acted towards you with all the kindness, liberality, and consideration in my power, which I fear your unfortunate nature is not capable of appreciating.

"Your personalities do not in the least surprise me for you have taught me to expect them. Did I deserve the opprobrious epithets you have bestowed upon my character, I fear I should not be worthy of that 'respect from the respected' which I have throughout life endeavoured to gain, and which I have reason to believe now enjoy.

"You are quite right when you assert that I soug

you in the first instance. No one has a higher estimate than myself of your talent, and the 'Heart of Gold' was written in consequence of my expressed desire to possess a play from a man of your genius and celebrity. It is quite true that I have had that play by me for three seasons. It was not acted during the two first seasons, as you already know, from the unfortunate disagreement between me and * * *.

"During the present season, you will remember, you were put aside *only* for YOURSELF. When you wrote the comedy of 'St. Cupid,' *you* sought *me*, because at the time you wanted money, which I at once advanced. And to suit *your* interest, quite as well as my *own*, it was determined *between us* that 'St. Cupid' should take the place of the 'Heart of Gold' (which was then about to be presented) and be acted first. In our third compact, which you afterwards thought proper to break, *you* again sought *me*, because *again* you wanted money, which *I* again at once advanced. A year elapsed, and you had not written one line; you declined fulfilling your agreement with me; and the money I had last advanced, namely, 100*l.*, was returned to me with 5*l.* interest.

"To meet your evident desire that the 'Heart of Gold' should be brought out without any further delay, I purposed making it the first novelty of the ensuing season, and the scenery was already in progress. I cannot understand the damaging alteration of cast of which you complain. I never contemplated withdrawing Mrs. Kean from *Maud*; Mr. Harley is cast the character you expressly wrote for him; and when I mentioned Mrs. W. Lacy, you appeared perfectly satisfied with her for the maid. The only alteration, then, is the substitution of Mr. Ryder for myself as *John Dymond*, which, in theatrical parlance, is a rugged,

heavy character, and an elderly man. Mr. Ryder is a good actor, and certainly a favourite at the Princess's, while in other parts he seems acceptable to you. I cannot, then, see what serious damage you can imagine the cast sustains by the simple removal of an actor whose value you are ever endeavouring to depreciate. I never expressed any partiality for the part of *Dymond*, for I do not think it suited to me; but would very willingly have done my best with it to have satisfied the views and wishes of a popular and *friendly* author; although I see no reason why I should in the slightest degree inconvenience myself for one who studiously seeks occasions to indulge in unprovoked hostility towards

“Yours faithfully,

“CHARLES KEAN.

“I quit London for the Continent on Saturday, and shall be happy to hear from you respecting the re-purchase of your play, on my return in October.”

“To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

“Royal Princess's Theatre,
“11th October, 1853.

“DEAR SIR,—

“Having returned to London, I am anxious to ascertain if you are now prepared to carry out your own proposal of re-purchasing the ‘Heart of Gold. Your answer will oblige

“Yours faithfully,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

“ To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

“ 26, Circus Road, St. John's Wood,
“ October 12, 1853.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ My proposal to re-purchase the ‘ Heart of Gold ’ was, as you will perceive, purely *provisional*. I have beset no manager with any communication on the matter ; and from the aspect of the British theatre in 1853, I see no likelihood of any very successful issue from the representation of the play elsewhere. I can only wish that the time bestowed upon it had been employed on any other composition, that would have borne, as it might, immediate results. Any way, in the present condition of the London stage, I cannot give any further attention to a matter that has been productive only of annoyance and disappointment to

“ Yours faithfully,

“ D. JERROLD.”

“ To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.

“ Royal Princess's Theatre,
“ Oct. 13th, 1853.

“ DEAR SIR,—

“ Your letter of yesterday's date has required me to refer to our correspondence, in which you volunteer the proposal of re-purchasing your play of the ‘ Heart of Gold.’ In yours of the 25th of August last, you say, ‘ Possibly I may be enabled to relieve you of my drama. In the event of finding another theatre, are you disposed, the money being re-paid, to return the drama ? ’ And again, on the 30th August, you write, ‘ I do not return to London until the end of September ; I will then, should I *find* my drama available else-

where, of which I have little doubt, re-purchase it of you.'

"From these two communications I naturally concluded you had some arrangement in immediate view. You are scarcely likely to *find* a purchaser, unless you *looked* for one; and if you have 'beset no manager' with any communication on the subject, I confess I do not see how any manager could know you had such an article to dispose of. There are two points in your letter I am unable to understand. First, how the aspect of the British theatre in 1853 can have changed during the short interval of seven weeks, which has elapsed since you made your first overture to me on the subject. And, second, whether your expression, 'I see no likelihood of any very successful issue from the play elsewhere,' is intended as a compliment to my particular theatre, or as an oblique condemnation of the insufficiency of *all theatres*. Having paid you 300*l.* down on delivery of the play, in my humble judgment the 'immediate results,' as far as your interests are concerned, have assumed a tolerably substantial form. Mine, I regret to say, are for the present in rather a dim perspective; and the delay has been principally occasioned by your own proposal, which, I now understand, you *find yourself* utterly unable to carry out.

"I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

"CHARLES KEAN."

"To CHARLES KEAN, ESQ.

"26, Circus Road, St. John's Wood,

"Oct. 18th, 1853.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I have little to add to my last. Should an opportunity present itself, promising a fair production of my drama elsewhere than at your theatre, I shall *most gladly*

carry out my first provisional intention of re-purchasing the play.

“Considering that you are the person who has, originally, broken faith in the matter, it is I who have the right of complaint, for procrastination and final disappointment. I have only to repeat that I did not seek you, and am heartily sorry that you ever addressed yourself to

“Yours faithfully,

“D. JERROLD.”

“*To DOUGLAS JERROLD, ESQ.*

“October 14th, 1853.

“DEAR SIR,—

“My reply to yours, of this date, shall be comprised in very few words, and will, I sincerely hope, close our correspondence. Argument having failed, you seem disposed to retire on personalities. There I confess my inability to engage, and must decline to follow.

“I most emphatically deny ever having ‘broken faith’ with you. This is a chimera of your own creation,—an imaginary disappointment,—which I think you will find it very difficult to substantiate beyond mere assertion. You say you are ‘heartily sorry that I ever addressed myself to you.’ The balance of regret ought to weigh heavily on my side; as, on looking over my books, I find I have paid you 600*l.* for two plays (one as yet unacted); and that sum is considerably under the loss I sustained by ‘*St. Cupid.*’

“Yours faithfully,

“CHARLES KEAN.”

Before closing the subject, we have yet a remark to make on Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's book. At page 11 of his preface, in reply to some communications sent to the *Press*, an American paper, by a London correspondent, he says :—

“ Then the American public is informed that Douglas Jerrold was ‘down’ upon Mr. Charles Kean, in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, till his death, because he conceived that Mr. Kean had purposely contrived the failure of the ‘Heart of Gold.’ The fact is that, after this piece was produced, my father never wrote a line about Mr. Kean or his management in the said newspaper.”

Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's memory has sadly failed him, or he would have scarcely ventured this strong assertion. We cannot expect our readers to waste their valuable time by wading through the heavy columns from November, 1854, to April, 1857. We supply them with an index to save that trouble.* They will there find abundant evidence that the series of notices on Mr. Kean and his management was continued, whenever the production of a new piece supplied the opportunity, in the same strain, and carrying internal evidence, which cannot be mistaken, of proceeding from the same pen. A denial of the latter inference would amount to a transparent quibble. There are the articles, to speak for themselves, inserted by Mr. Douglas Jerrold in the paper of which he was the sole editor. He is as much responsible for their paternity as if they stood acknowledged by his signature at full length.

* See *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, Nov. 12th, 1854 ; Jan. 14th, 1855 ; Jan. 21st, 1855 ; Jan. 28th, 1855 ; Feb. 4th, 1855 ; March 18th, 1855 ; April 15th, 1855 ; May 20th, 1855 ; May 27th, 1855 ; June 10th, 1855 ; July 8th, 1855 ; July 22d, 1855 ; Aug. 31st, 1856 ; Oct. 19th, 1856 ; Oct. 26th, 1856 ; Nov. 9th, 1856 ; March 15th, 1857.

All well-wishers to the stage may probably regret that a dramatic author should ever combine the apparently incompatible functions of a dramatic critic. If his play be rejected or ill received, not being able to retort on the public, the manager presents himself as a ready scape-goat on whom to vent with pen or influence the overflowings of his disappointment. The case under discussion presents a remarkable instance. For years, Mr. Douglas Jerrold avails himself of a two-fold public channel, entirely at his command, to undermine as far as his power extends Mr. C. Kean's professional reputation, to cry down his most successful efforts, and to hold him up to ridicule and contempt. But when Mr. C. Kean, after long forbearance, privately defends himself for the satisfaction of his friends, he is charged in the coarsest terms with a departure from the courtesies of *refined society*, and the meanness of violating the confidence of *honourable* minds.

* We have stated the facts : the commentary we leave to the public.

CHAPTER V.

FOURTH SEASON OF MR. C. KEAN'S MANAGEMENT AT THE PRINCESS'S—SARDANAPALUS CONTINUED WITH UNCEASING ATTRACTION—SHERIDAN'S COMEDY OF THE RIVALS—THE LANCERS, ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH, BY CAPTAIN L. VERNON—A MODERN FASHIONABLE DRAWING-ROOM—ARTICLE IN A WEEKLY PAPER, ON THE WINDSOR THEATRICALS—STATEMENTS ANSWERED—LARGE SUMS PAID FOR ORIGINAL DRAMAS—LONG AND SERIOUS ILLNESS OF MRS. C. KEAN—PANTOMIME OF THE MILLER AND HIS MEN—REVIVAL OF KING RICHARD III.—COLLEY CIBBER'S ALTERATIONS—GREAT DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON THIS POINT—REASONS FOR ADOPTING THE ALTERED PLAY—RESULT NOT SATISFACTORY—SUPPOSED CAUSES—MARRIED UNMARRIED—AWAY WITH MELANCHOLY, AND A STORM IN A TEA-CUP—MAGICAL SPECTACLE OF FAUST AND MARGUERITE—MR. C. KEAN'S MEPHISTOPHELES—FROM VILLAGE TO COURT—THE COURIER OF LYONS PRODUCED FOR MR. KEAN'S BENEFIT—HIS PERFORMANCE IN THE DOUBLE CHARACTERS OF LESURGUES AND DUBOSC—CLOSE OF THE SEASON—NUMBER OF PIECES PERFORMED—MELODRAMA AND HIGH TRAGEDY.

THE fourth season at the Princess's commenced on Monday, the 10th of October, 1853, with "Sardanapalus," which appeared to have lost none of its attraction. The old comedy of the "Rivals" was revived, and with the beginning of November the performances were varied by the production of a highly interesting drama, in three acts, entitled the "Lancers; or, the Gentleman's Son," freely adapted by Captain Leicester Vernon, M.P., from the "Fils de Famille," of Monseigneur Bayard, performed during the preceding year with unusual success at the Gymnase, in Paris. This piece was acted for forty-nine nights, and gave universal satisfaction. Nothing could be more complete than a

fac simile of a modern drawing-room, which was represented in the second act, on a stage principally filled by subordinate actors. It is not easy to marshal a mimic army on the boards, to go through the evolutions of a battle, to arrange a triumphal or civic procession, or to produce the trained confusion of a mob of rioters; but it is far more difficult to present a full company of ladies and gentlemen arrayed in fashionable attire, and moving with the ease of polished society. It is a curious fact, in the peculiarities of acting, that in private theatricals, where the performers are chiefly drawn from the aristocratic circles, civil or military, the break-down generally occurs with the representatives of the high classes, who become stiff and awkward when required to assume theatrically what may be termed their natural attributes. Amateur low comedians, such as *Jem Baggs* or *Bill Mattock*, are more plentiful than *Rangers*, *Doricourts*, or *Mirabels*. The eccentric Lord Barrymore was inimitable in the ignorant vulgarity of *Scrub*, but failed when he attempted the airy elegance of *Archer*.

The altered tone of Mr. Douglas Jerrold's mind, in regard to Mr. C. Kean, had for some time manifested itself in a series of depreciating sneers, and insinuations, through the ready medium of the two papers before named. On the 13th of November, 1853, he opened a direct attack (the immediate occasion for which presented itself in a recent performance at Windsor Castle). An article in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* contained these passages, under the head of

“THE GREAT KEAN MONOPOLY.

“The Kean monopoly has been broken through. Mr. Phelps performed ‘Henry the Fifth,’ at Windsor Castle, on Thursday last. He has been the first to find a north-west passage to the palace. The passage once found,

others may quickly follow. The difficulties of the passage no one can conceive, but those who have had to steer through the immense blocks of ice which Mr. Charles Kean has thrown in the way of his brother managers. . . . He has used this privilege for the glorification of himself as an actor and a manager, until the Queen and the Court have been brought to believe that there was but one English actor, and but one English theatre; that actor being Mr. Charles Kean, and that theatre being the Princess's!! . . . We hope a dramatic commission will be issued from Windsor Castle (and how proud we shall be if we are nominated to sit upon it!) to inquire into the following questions:—

“How far the patronage bestowed upon Mr. Charles Kean has benefited the drama?

“How often he has allowed other managers to perform?—and the number of times those managers have performed in comparison with Charles Kean?

“To inquire how often Mr. Phelps has performed at Windsor Castle, before Thursday evening, November 10th, 1853?

“To discover the names of the other tragedians who have played at Windsor Castle, by the kind permission and favour of Mr. Charles Kean?

“To ascertain, if possible, the number of original pieces Mr. Charles Kean has produced since he has been in possession of the patronage of the court?

“On the other side, to ascertain the number of revival adaptations, and more particularly translations, which Mr. Charles Kean has produced during the same period?

“To find out the sum of money, if possible, which Mr. Charles Kean has paid to living authors for the encouragement of the drama, since he has been manager of the Princess's?

“On the other side, to find out the sums of money which Mr. Charles Kean has paid to translators for the discouragement of ditto, during the same period?

“To investigate the principles, if any, of Mr. Charles Kean’s management? And lastly to state the extent of injury which the English stage would suffer, and whether it would be more weak and ailing than it already is, if Mr. Charles Kean were to lose to-morrow the lucrative situation which he at present holds at Court, of ‘WET NURSE TO THE BRITISH DRAMA?’

“If the above commission is issued, we should like of all things to be present during Mr. Charles Kean’s examination. In the meantime, Mr. Phelps has broken up the great Kean monopoly; and the monopoly now broken, we hope that henceforth dramatic free trade will reign at the palace in its stead. The actor’s loaf and the author’s crust (for where the former gets a loaf the latter only gets a crust) both depend upon it.”

On reading this article it is difficult to decide whether disrespect to the Court or animosity against Mr. C. Kean constitutes the prominent feature. A string of assertions and inferences such as we find here lie beyond the scope of argument; their value can only be tested by *facts*. How do the facts stand in the case before us? The evidences of printed bills and authenticated accounts present them as follows:—Previous to his performance of *Henry the Fifth* at Windsor Castle, Mr. Phelps had appeared there in the characters of *Francesco Agolanti*, in Leigh Hunt’s “Legend of Florence,” in *Hubert* (“King John”), and in the sick *King*, in the second part of “*Henry the Fourth*.” When “*Henry the Fifth*” was proposed, by the Court, as one of the Windsor plays, during the season of 1853, Mr. Kean was asked to represent the hero. He remarked that he had never yet acted the part, but that Mr. Phelps had, and suggested the pro-

priety of its being committed to that gentleman. The suggestion was acceded to. Mr. Macready, Mr. Vandenhoff, and Mr. James Wallack had also been included in the casts of "Julius Cæsar," "Hamlet," and "Charles the Twelfth." Up to the date of Mr. Douglas Jerrold's article, thirty-two dramatic pieces had been performed; eleven of these before Mr. Kean became a manager. Nine were supplied from the resources of his own theatre; the remaining twenty-three chiefly from the Haymarket, the Lyceum, Sadler's Wells, and the Adelphi. Mr. C. Kean had himself performed eleven times, Mrs. C. Kean eight, Mr. Webster seven, Mr. C. Mathews five, Mr. Keeley ten, and Mr. Buckstone three. The power and patronage so emphatically denounced by Mr. Douglas Jerrold, consisted, as far as Mr. C. Kean was concerned, in carrying out the wishes and views of his illustrious employers; the lucrative monopoly in the disbursement of a large sum of money. Mr. Kean volunteered his gratuitous services as manager, which were graciously accepted. He might venture respectfully to name a particular performer or play if asked to do so; but no reasonable person will suppose for a moment that he could presume to step beyond that point; his functions were to obey and not to dictate. When an opportunity offered he exercised the permission of suggesting, as in the special instances of Mr. Phelps for *Henry the Fifth*, and Mr. Douglas Jerrold's play of "St. Cupid," which, through his earnest recommendation, received the stamp of court favour before it was submitted to the public. But notwithstanding this, the play proved, in a commercial sense, a failure. The "actor's loaf" and the "author's crust" changed relative value, which Mr. Jerrold assigns to them; the former being represented by the Algebraic figure (minus) to the amount of something like 800*l.*; the latter exemplified by + (plus) 300*l.*

Leaving the topic of the Windsor plays, the points so broadly insinuated in other portions of the article are equally answered by simple *facts*.

During his three years of management, Mr. C. Kean had accepted and paid for nineteen original dramas, of which fifteen had been already acted, with eleven adaptations or translations. The Shakespearean revivals amounted to nine. For the original pieces he had paid 3,685*l.*; for the adaptations and translations, 1,135*l.*; total 4,820*l.* Of this large amount, 600*l.* had been received for two pieces by the writer of the article, who publicly called upon Mr. Kean to show "the sum of money, *if possible*, which he had paid to living authors for the encouragement of the drama, since he had been manager of the Princess's?" Within two seasons after the date to which these particulars refer, Mr. Kean paid nearly 2,000*l.* more for costly novelties which were seldom productive. Such experiments cannot be repeated *ad infinitum*. They enforce their own termination, by the most coercive of all arguments—a heavy balance on the wrong side of the ledger.

With the commencement of 1854, the arrangements of the season received an important check in the serious illness of Mrs. C. Kean, which occasioned the substitution of Miss Murray for her part of *Myrrha* in "Sardanapalus," and necessitated a total change in the general plan. For a long interval of nearly eighteen months, the public lamented the absence of one of their greatest favourites, while her husband, losing her invaluable co-operation, felt himself placed in the position of a leader deprived of his right arm.

The pantomime on the old familiar subject of the "Miller and his Men," proved to be one of the most attractive that had been brought forward of late years. Some original and highly effective tricks transported

from Paris produced an extraordinary sensation. The value of a good pantomime trick in these days, if entirely new, is equal to that of a virgin nugget. On Monday, the 20th of February, 1854, "Richard the Third" was revived with great splendour. In this instance Mr. C. Kean departed for once from his system of a pure restoration of the text of Shakespeare, and adopted the long-sanctioned amendments of Colley Cibber. It was a difficult point on which he deliberated maturely before coming to a decision. Shakespeare's tragedy, under the title of the "Life and Death of King Richard the Third," had been essayed at Covent Garden on the 12th of March, 1821, the principal character by Mr. Macready. It was coldly received, and a single repetition, on the 19th, wound up the experiment. Something was gained in the restoration of *Queen Margaret of Anjou*,* and *Clarence's* dream, but more was lost by the want of condensation in the latter portion of the play; while the impeachment of *Hastings* so long pilfered by Rowe, in his "Jane Shore," fell flat from being already too familiar.

Mr. C. Kean's reasons for preferring the altered version were set forward as follows, in his fly-leaf:—

"It is now a general conviction, that to do justice to the stage to the immortal productions of Shakespeare they should be represented, as closely as possible, in conformity with the ascertained text of the poet; and in the Shakespearean revivals which have taken place in late years, at more than one theatre, a laudable endeavour has been made to keep this salutary object in view. If a departure, then, from a rule which it behoves every true lover of his art to follow with loyal fidelity, occu-

* Mr. Phelps subsequently retained *Queen Margaret*, and Miss Gl played her very effectively.

at any time, some apology or explanation would seem due to the public for the rare exception.

“In selecting the play of ‘King Richard the Third,’ I have, upon mature consideration, decided on adopting the well-known version of Colley Cibber, instead of going back to the original text of Shakespeare. That text has been practically declared by the greatest ornaments of the drama, less fitted in its integrity for representation on the stage than almost any other generally acted play of the great poet; whilst, on the other hand, the tragedy, as modified by Cibber, being rather a condensation than an alteration of Shakespeare (the interpolations themselves being chiefly selections from his other plays), has been pronounced one of the most admirable and skilful instances of dramatic adaptation ever known. David Garrick made his first appearance in London, in 1741, in Colley Cibber’s version of ‘King Richard the Third;’ and Henderson adopted the same play; the classical John Kemble followed deliberately in the wake of his great predecessors; and to these succeeded George Frederick Cooke, and my late father, Edmund Kean. With such distinguished precedents for my guide, I might well hesitate in reverting, on the present occasion, to the original text, even if their judgment had not been sanctioned by the voice of experience, and were it not also a fact that the tragedy of ‘King Richard the Third,’ as adapted by Cibber, is most intimately associated with the traditionary admiration of the public for those renowned and departed actors.

“There may be a question as to the propriety of tampering at all with the writings of our bard: but there can be none that as an *acting* play, Colley Cibber’s version of ‘King Richard the Third,’ evinces great dramatic judgment, and a consummate acquaintance with scenic effect. To be convinced of this, it is sufficient to glance

at the skilful arrangement of the fifth act ; and there can be no doubt, that a careful comparison of the original and the altered tragedy, left no choice to the masters I have named, who were naturally anxious to present the work in the most striking and spirit-stirring form before the eyes of the spectator.

“ In the production at this theatre of ‘ Sardanapalus,’ ‘ Macbeth,’ and ‘ King John,’ I have selected different periods of history for illustration, and have endeavoured to arrive at every available authority, with the view of transferring, as far as possible, to the stage, a living and pictorial embodiment of the past. ‘ King Richard the Third’ affords a new epoch, distinct from all the foregoing, and I have taken the same pains to give proper scenic and decorative effect to this most busy and eventful chapter of our annals.

“ The following authorities have been consulted :— ‘ Meyrick’s Ancient Armour,’ ‘ Col. C. H. Smith’s Ancient Costume of Great Britain,’ ‘ Planché’s unpublished work on the Costume of Richard III.,’ ‘ Strutt’s Dresses and Habits of the People of England,’ ‘ Fairholt’s Costume in England,’ ‘ Fosbroke’s Encyclopædia of Antiquities,’ ‘ Dugdale’s Monasticon Anglicanum,’ ‘ Shaw’s Dresses and Decorations,’ ‘ Stothard’s Monumental Effigies,’ ‘ Froissart’s Chronicles,’ ‘ Pugin’s Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume,’ and the Herald Office.”

“ Richard the Third,” in its new form, ran only nineteen nights, a short career and a very limited success for a great Shakespearean revival at the Princess’s. The result was disappointing to the manager, and unexpected by his admirers. Where was the cause of this comparative failure to be sought for? Not in the acting, for it was loudly applauded by the audience, and eulogized warmly in the leading papers. Mr. C. Kean had w

much of his early London reputation in the "Crook-backed Tyrant," and his performance now, as might be expected, was far superior to what it had been in 1838, and 1841. The whole action of the play centres in *Richard*. He is the pivot on which every movement turns; an Atlas who carries the entire weight on his shoulders. Seldom absent from the scene, his controlling agency pervades the collected *dramatis personæ*, who appear as obedient machines directed by his single will. He is all evil like *John*, unillumined by even a glimmering of humanity; but he is, unlike the earlier Plantagenet, gifted at the same time with a subtle and commanding genius, and moves through the scene a master demon of irresistible power. From his entrance to his fall, the mind and eye of the spectator are riveted on his proceedings. He fascinates like the rattlesnake, although you know that his spring is death. The character is altogether one of the most arduous and complicated in the range of the drama, requiring from its representative a combination of mental and physical energy seldom united in the same individual. The finest conceptions pass for nothing, if the actor lacks the more telling faculty of execution. *Richard* is alternately restless and contemplative; thoughtful in arranging his schemes, rapid and decisive as lightning in carrying them into execution; hypocritical and audacious; gloomy and sardonically humorous; remorseless, but accessible to the terrors of conscience; cunning and bold; treacherous and heroically daring. He is a perpetual contrast, a multiplied antithesis, as crafty as Ulysses, as variable as Proteus, and more full of unscrupulous expedients than Machiavel himself. The actor who can embody all these opposing passions and sentiments in one portrait of brilliant colouring, is undoubtedly a mighty master in his art. Mr. C. Kean accomplished this, and fully vindicated his title to the

post which public opinion has accorded to him, after long years of trial and study, and in which he has never been supplanted,—that of being the first and greatest tragedian of his day. From his entrance, in close soliloquy with himself, until his desperate combat and dying agony on the field of Bosworth, all was sustained in perfect keeping with the character, and fearfully impressive. For passages of superior merit, we might select the entire scene with *Lady Anne*, the soliloquies, marked by variety and concentrated meaning, the repulse of Buckingham in the fourth act, the delivery of the celebrated line, “Off with his head—so much for Buckingham!” the tent scene; and, above all, the exclamation, “Who’s there?” on the intrusion of *Catesby* into his tent. In all these points Mr. C. Kean produced effects startling as they were original, and calling forth enthusiastic applause. The modern play-going public indulge too sparingly in these demonstrative evidences of their satisfaction. Without encouragement the most effervescing actor becomes chilled. Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble used frequently to declare that they were unable to exert their full powers to a cold or apathetic audience. On the revival of which we are now speaking, every part down to the inferior subordinates was efficiently represented, and when to such acting is added the gorgeous perfection of stage paraphernalia and historic accuracy of which our ancestors had no conception, entertainment is thus profitably blended with instruction, and the theatre becomes in reality, what its sanguine advocates have long predicted it might be brought to, a valuable school of antiquarian illustration, and a living lecture on the past.

Why, again we ask ourselves, did this fine play, thus presented, fail to excite the public or draw them in crowds to the theatre? We can only conclude that it was because Cibber’s adaptation had lost its time-

honoured credit, and nothing now would be tolerated but genuine, unadulterated Shakespeare. And yet, on the other hand, if the original play had been preferred, and condensed within acting limits, we doubt much whether the result would have been more satisfactory. Accident and caprice are so mixed up with the fate of all theatrical ventures, that they baffle the soundest judgment and the longest practice. But opinions sink in value when the opportunity of testing them by experiment has passed away.

On the 28th of March, a serious drama taken from the French by Mr. Morris Barnett, was produced under the title of "Married Unmarried," and was most favourably received. The principal parts were well acted by Mr. Ryder, Mr. W. Lacy, Miss Heath, and Miss Murray. It was repeated fifty-eight nights, but after the first attraction subsided, was forgotten with many others of a similar class. Two very amusing farces, "Away with Melancholy," by Mr. J. M. Morton, and "A Storm in a Tea-Cup," by Mr. Bayle Bernard, were also called in to vary the performances.

On Wednesday, in Easter week (April the 19th), a more important novelty formed the principal feature of the bill, under the title of "Faust and Marguerite," a magical drama, adapted from the French. During Mr. C. Kean's theatrical career, he has scarcely achieved a more decided triumph as an actor than in this singular production. It presented him a new line, totally distinct from any in which he had courted distinction on earlier occasions.

The subject of this melodramatic spectacle had long been familiar to many in the German of Goëthe; in more than a dozen English translations by writers of eminence, all of whom have conveyed much of the true spirit of the original; and also from a more recent repre-

sensation of the play by the German company at the St. James's Theatre in 1852. It excites some surprise that a composition of so much inherent power, and withal so popular and well-known, had not been transferred to the English stage at an earlier period. The operatic play named "Faustus," produced with considerable although ephemeral success at Drury Lane, in 1826, had scarcely any connexion with the imaginative story of Goëthe beyond the name. He himself, in all probability, had never read the old drama of Marlowe, which the affected lovers of black letter are wont to praise upon hearsay; and if he had, he disregarded it. When the great German philosopher composed this renowned work, which crowns his reputation, he had no view to the production of an acting drama. He thought little of the applauses of the pit, the marvellous expression of the actor, or the resources of the mechanist. He adopted the dramatic form, because it presented greater facilities than either the epic or didactic of carrying out in continuous dialogue the profound subtleties and elaborated disquisitions, the varieties of thought and feeling into which his subject was likely to entrain him. His "Faust" is, in fact, a complicated moral essay, an anatomical investigation of the heart of man, partaking more of the nature of a metaphysical poem than of a represented play; while, at the same time, it contains many of the most essential and prominent requisites of the latter, in incident, contrasted character, and exciting situations. There are some indelicate passages, and others that more than border on impiety; but they are not taken into account by the enthusiastic admirers of Goëthe, who overlook small blemishes in a galaxy of beauty. The French playwright, M. Michel Carré, has availed himself of the dramatic elements, with the peculiar tact in construction for which our neighbours are so

remarkable, and wherein we must yield them the palm of superiority without dispute. The plan he followed has been carried out with even improved success by the English adapter. The French piece was produced in Paris at the Théâtre du Gymnase, on the 19th of August, 1850. The version performed at the Princess's was closely modelled upon this, with some very material alterations, all tending to one point—increased effect. The charm of the romantic drama lies in quick and varied action, which keeps the attention of the spectator ever on the alert, and excites without wearying him. To produce this, in the present instance, great pains were taken to clear up the somewhat dreamy philosophy of Goëthe; to connect his disjointed plot; to confine the incidents retained to a consecutive series; and to relieve the deep sardonic malignity of *Mephistopheles* by an infusion of light, satirical humour, which makes him sometimes amusing, and almost human, instead of being ever demoniacally appalling. By these means, the general effect is rendered less oppressive, while the interest of the situations and the point of the moral are in no degree weakened. We lose, it is true, the poetical flights occasionally mystified, *more Germanico*; and instead of transcendental philosophy we have clear conversational dialogue, which by some sharp critics was condemned as homely and even vulgar.

There were, and are still, divided opinions as to the moral and religious tendency of this singular drama. Some objectors wondered how it passed the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain, and loudly questioned the orthodoxy of the conclusion; but the public poured in in crowds to see a beautiful and original exhibition. Few pieces have been more permanently attractive. The greater share of this success was due to Mr. Kean's acting in *Mephistopheles*. The entire business of the scene, as

with *Richard the Third*, centres in him. He pulls the wires and the obedient puppets respond to his call. The character stands alone, and is exclusively *sui generis*, belonging to no previous class, and without prototype or parallel. The actor has no model to set before his mental or physical eye as a guide. He cannot turn to established conceptions or conventional rules. He must create a style suited to an identical portraiture, unlike any he has ever studied before, either in contemporary life, in poetry, history, fable, or tradition. The attributes which distinguish *Mephistopheles* have no analogy with those required for *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo*, *Lear*, *Shylock*, or *Benedick*. To conceive and execute this strange novelty, demands a concentration of strength, a distinctness of purpose, and a versatile imagination, seldom indeed combined. These faculties Mr. Kean developed in his personation with admirable skill. Throughout he was cool, self-possessed, decisive, original, and certain of himself. The *Mephistopheles* of the drama is too conscious of his power to forget his constitutional irony, his contempt for man, or to indulge in ebullitions of mere human anger or emotion. He plays with his victims as the cat does with the mouse, or the angler with the trout, which he has securely hooked and can land when he pleases. The character would be intolerable, but for the humour with which it is ingeniously invested. Mr. Kean's embodiment of this *unique* portrait has been generally pronounced one of the most extraordinary specimens of histrionic art the stage can boast. It can only be understood by being seen, and that more than once before its merit can be thoroughly appreciated. It is, in fact, a thing to arrest and absorb the faculties of the spectator while the play is in progress, and to beset his imagination for hours after. Individual points are not easily particularized, neither

does the part admit of minute dissection. It must be taken as a whole, and judged in its integrity. *Mephistopheles* is seldom absent from the scene, and you feel him as intensely when he is not present as if he stood before your eyes. Even while he is silent, his expression speaks with more eloquence than language. In actual bulk of words he says little, but every syllable has weight. His speeches are epigrams, with a sting at the end of every line.

On the 5th of June a lively and successful drama in two acts by Mr. J. M. Morton was produced under the title of "From Village to Court," adapted, as usual, from the French, and on the 26th of the same month, Mr. C. Kean selected for his benefit a second melodrama founded on a remarkable trial with a melancholy result, and called the "Courier of Lyons."* For the moment, the series of Shakespearean plays was suspended, much to the injury of the manager's exchequer, and the gratification of the public, by the long-continued illness of Mrs. C. Kean.

The judicial fact which supplies the materials for the "Courier of Lyons," occurred in Paris during the early period of the Revolution, under the rule of the Directory. A robbery and murder of the most atrocious nature was committed by three accomplices; two were taken, but the third, and principal contriver escaped. A person of respectable rank in society, and of unblemished character, totally innocent, was arrested on strong suspicion, arising from his extraordinary resemblance to the real criminal. Direct evidence of identity was produced, and sworn to, against him. He was tried, condemned, and guillotined with the other two. Shortly after, the true culprit was discovered, and the fatal mistake became publicly known. The family of the unfortunate victim (a second

* See the French "Causes Célèbres."

Calas), under the early consulship of Napoleon, instituted a suit for the restoration of his property, which had been confiscated according to law, and succeeded in obtaining a reversal of the sentence, with the full acknowledgment of their rights. The subject, with altered names and locality, was dramatized nearly thirty years ago, but never produced on the London boards.* The version from which the present English adaptation, by Mr. Charles Reade, is taken, was first acted at the Théâtre de la Gaïeté in Paris, on the 16th of March, 1850. By permission of his living representatives, the real name of "Lesurgues" was restored to the principal character. In Paris there was a double catastrophe, alternately represented to suit opposite tastes. According to one, Lesurgues was executed, and by the other reprieved. The English adapter and manager rejected the variation and preferred sending the audience home in a happy mood. In other respects the drama was greatly condensed, the parts heightened, and the interest concentrated, to bring it more in accordance with English taste.

The piece is one of rapid and exciting action. The interest begins with the beginning, never flags, and rises gradually to the conclusion, keeping the audience in an agony of suspense to the last moment. As a melodrama it ranks high in its class. Of Mr. Kean's acting in the two characters of *Dubosc* and *Lesurgues* it is impossible to speak in warmer terms than it deserved. The effect was far more striking than in the "Corsican Brothers," as the features of the parts are thrown into stronger contrast, and afford a wider scope to the executive variety of the artist. Nothing can be more opposed than the vulgar, coarse villainy of the one, and the refined, honest, and manly fervour of

* A translation was acted in Dublin in 1827, under the title of the "Courier of Naples."

the other. The changes are absolutely miraculous. The actor leaves the stage at the left hand side, and in a moment appears at the right—the same individual in person, but a different character, changed in costume, and utterly opposed in manners. The distinct identity and attributes of each were never lost sight of or confounded for a single instant. To preserve this in perpetual alternations through a long play is in itself a physical task demanding unusual power. The appearance of the double at the winding-up was a mechanical mystery which many spectators witnessed for a score of times without satisfying themselves how such an instantaneous substitution could be contrived. Her Majesty and the Prince Consort occupied the Royal Box on the first night (their attendance being a marked compliment to Mr. Kean on the occasion of his benefit), and appeared to be wrapt in deep attention by the interest of the scene. The “*Courier of Lyons*” came out late in June, a position which only allowed twenty-six repetitions up to the last night. It was renewed when the theatre opened again, and attracted nearly the same number of gratified audiences.

Mr. Kean closed his third season on the 9th of August, 1854. The number of different dramas played amounted to eighteen; the novelties, including the pantomime, to eight. The protracted illness of Mrs. Kean disarranged the plans of the season, compelled the suspension of the projected Shakespearean revivals, and drove the manager, as a matter of expediency rather than choice, to substitute melodramatic spectacle more prominently than he intended. By the performance of such parts as *Mephistopheles*, and the blended *Dubosc* and *Joseph Lesurgues*, he afforded his detractors an opportunity which they greedily embraced of saying that, although unrivalled in melodrama, he was not a tragedian of the

first class ; forgetting the long range of the highest and most legitimate tragedy on which his progressive reputation had been built. Such objections, when wanted, spring up as rapidly as mushrooms, in equal abundance, and from similar ground. The modern romantic drama embraces a mixture of components which assuredly do not carry the mind up to the classic elevation of the Sophoclean or Shakespearean tragedy. But an actor of skill and taste may raise an inferior branch of the art to which he stoops occasionally, without detriment to his own fame ; and of this an eminent instance will present itself when we treat of Mr. Kean's performance in "Louis the Eleventh."

Garrick was condemned by some of his enthusiastic advocates for descending to *Abel Drugger*, *Scrub*, and *Fribble* ; but by so doing he proved his boundless versatility, and gave additional contrast to the passion of *Lear*, the hypocrisy of *Richard*, and the melancholy grace of *Hamlet*.

CHAPTER VI.

DELAYED COMMENCEMENT OF THE FIFTH SEASON AT THE PRINCESS'S—
 CHOLERA IN LONDON—SUDDEN ILLNESS AND DEATH OF MRS. FITZ-
 WILLIAM—DEATH OF MRS. WARNER—LIVING TOO FAST—MR. DOUGLAS
 JERROLD'S PLAY OF THE HEART OF GOLD—COMPARATIVE FAILURE—
 SPECTACLE OF SCHAMYL THE CIRCASSIAN HERO—PANTOMIME OF BLUE-
 BEARD—CASIMIR DE LA VIGNE'S LOUIS THE ELEVENTH, ADAPTED BY M.
 DION BOURCICAULT—GREAT SUCCESS OF THE PLAY—EXTRAORDINARY
 IMPRESSION MADE BY MR. C. KEAN IN THE CHARACTER OF THE KING—
 CRITICAL ANALYSIS—THE AUTHOR, THE ACTOR, AND THE PLAY—COM-
 PLIMENTARY LETTERS TO MR. C. KEAN.

THE commencement of Mr. Kean's fifth season was delayed longer than had been planned, from two incidental causes, the one public, the other private,—the visitation of Asiatic cholera in London, and his own illness, which detained him in Paris. The course of the destroying malady, which seems yet to be but imperfectly understood, was on this occasion as eccentric as that of a comet. Coming from the eastern districts, it paused with fatal effect in the immediate vicinity of Golden Square, and passing up Poland Street to the south side of Oxford Street, halted suddenly as if a barrier had arrested its progress at that point. No cases penetrated to the north. This singularity has been even more strikingly exhibited in India. A regiment on the march, with the two wings divided by a ravine, has been stricken on the one bank and not on the other. It has also been recorded by officers serving in that country that the deadly and unseen enemy has been checked by firing volleys of blank cartridge in the air. These facts support the theory adopted by

many, that, as regards cholera, atmospheric influence has much to do with the spread of infection.

This fearfully rapid disease deprived the stage of an actress of much celebrity, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, who died on the 11th of November, 1854, after an illness of a very few hours, being then only in her fifty-second year. She was born at Dover, where her father was manager, in a dwelling-house attached to the theatre. At five years old she began to act childish parts, and, at fourteen, was a leading actress in the Kent company. Her musical preceptress was Mrs. Bland, from whom she derived much of her peculiar charm in singing ballads and simple airs. In 1816, she appeared at the Haymarket, and subsequently removed to the Olympic and the Surrey, under Elliston and T. Dibdin. At the Olympic, she acquired notice by her performance as the *Countess of Lovelace*, in "Rochester," and at the Surrey surpassed Mrs. Egerton, the original *Madge Welford*, by the superiority with which she warbled the wild snatches of songs interwoven with the part. In 1821 she married Mr. Edward Fitzwilliam, a comic actor and vocalist, who left the stage in 1845, and died in 1852. In 1832, Mrs. Fitzwilliam assumed the helm of management at Sadler's Wells, and took her farewell benefit there in 1839. She then visited America for a year, and on her return engaged at the Haymarket. She left behind her a son and a daughter. The former, a music composer of rising fame, died prematurely. The latter filled an important situation in the theatre so long graced by her mother's abilities.

Mrs. Fitzwilliam was an artist in the school of Mr. Jordan and Miss Fanny Kelly;—a school which has still a representative in Mrs. Keeley. The four preserve succession which seems likely to terminate with the living inheritress. The line embraces chambermaids at

country simpletons, impudent boys, Englishwomen of humble rank, whether serious or comic; and includes in all, the fascinating accompaniment of artless, unornamented songs and melodies naturally introduced, and illustrative of the character to which they are attached.

The death of Mrs. Fitzwilliam was followed within a fortnight by that of Mrs. Warner, which occurred, though from a very different cause, on the 24th of September. She had long suffered under a most painful and incurable malady, which prostrated her powers and rendered her incapable of acting for nearly a year and a half. Her last appearance in England was at Sadler's Wells in August 1851, where she represented *Mrs. Oakly* for her own benefit. She then went to America, and played with all the success that could be desired, when indications of cancer compelled her return to undergo an operation. Again she visited New York, but the rapid increase of her disease rendered acting impossible, and, in the spring of 1853, she returned home, a hopeless invalid. From this period to the date of her death, she bore the most excruciating agony with surprising fortitude. Her Majesty the Queen warmly interested herself in the case, and allowed her the use of a carriage. Her friends exerted themselves to raise a fund for her support. Mrs. C. Kean, through her personal influence, obtained by far the largest subscription, amounting to 405*l.* 50*s.* of which was contributed by Mr. Kean and herself. This money was invested and paid in weekly proportions up to the day of Mrs. Warner's death. On the occasion of some judicial proceedings which took place in the bankruptcy court in December, 1853, the judge asked how the poor lady had been supported during the affliction of her long illness. By the exertions of many kind friends, was the answer, mentioning the names of the parties, but those of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were not even alluded to. The omis-

sion might have been accidental or intended. In either case it was extraordinary. Mrs. Warner was endowed with great personal beauty, and powers of a high order in the delineation of matronly heroines. Her best parts were *Lady Macbeth*, *Queen Katharine*, *Hermione* ("Winter's Tale"), *Emilia*, in "Othello," and the *Queen*, in "Hamlet," which latter she performed at the Windsor theatricals in 1849. Her name will ever remain associated with that of Mr. Phelps in the honourable experiment of converting Sadler's Wells into a Shakespearean theatre. The announcement on the opening-night, May 27th, 1848, contained this passage:—

"Mrs. Warner and Mr. Phelps have embarked in the management of Sadler's Wells Theatre, in the hope of eventually rendering it what a theatre ought to be—a place for justly representing the works of our great dramatic poets. This undertaking is commenced at a time when the stages which have been exclusively called 'national' are closed or devoted to very different objects from that of presenting the real drama of England, and when the law has placed all theatres upon an equal footing of security and responsibility, leaving no difference except in the object and conduct of the management."

On this occasion, Mrs. Warner delivered an opening address, written by Mr. T. J. Serle, and sustained *Lady Macbeth*, to the *Macbeth* of Mr. Phelps. Fifteen years have since elapsed. The persevering energy of Mr. Phelps has crowned the enterprize so boldly commenced in an unpromising locality with permanent success.

The season at the Princess's commenced on Monday the 9th of October, with a new comedietta, in one act by a young author, Mr. A. C. Troughton, entitled "Living Too Fast; or, a Twelvemonth's Honeymoon." It was eminently successful, and has held its place on the

stock list with undiminished popularity. The writer has since produced other pieces of a more important character, and has improved on his early promise. But the chief feature of the opening night was a drama, in three acts, by Mr. Douglas Jerrold, called "A Heart of Gold." This play, as we have mentioned in a preceding chapter, had been written for, and purchased by, Mr. Kean, prior to the acceptance of "St. Cupid," but by mutual agreement the order of respective production was reversed. Four years rolled on; actors left the company, others supplied their places, and important changes took place, interfering materially with the original arrangements.

The characters in "A Heart of Gold" were confined to homely life; there was no possible relief or aid to be supplied from show or pageantry, but there was something inherently dreary and uncomfortable in the plot, incidents, and final development. The general tone of notice in the papers implied, under kind expressions, an evident feeling that the work was below the standard of the author's reputation. The public confirmed this opinion by such a dull reception and slack attendance that the play was withdrawn after the eleventh representation, in consequence of deficient receipts. It had been most carefully rehearsed; new scenes were painted; and all the performers discharged their duty loyally, although the author, in his disappointment, laid much of the failure to their account.

On the 6th of November, the "Heart of Gold" was succeeded by a novelty of very opposite cast—a grand military spectacle, adapted by Mr. Palgrave Simpson, from a piece then playing in Paris with great success. The subject suggested itself from the political occurrences of the hour. Schamyl, the warrior-prophet of Circassia, had long been considered the delegated hero of the east. The liberation of his country from Russian

thralldom, through his agency, was as confidently looked for on the opening of the Crimean campaign, as the capture of Sebastopol by a *coup de main*, the carrying of the fleet at Cronstadt by our gallant admiral's sharpened cutlasses, or the consequent conflagration of the docks and arsenals at St. Petersburg. All these fondly indulged chimeras are, we doubt not, long since catalogued in the regions of the moon, as additions to the roll of unaccomplished events, examined by Astolfo when he ascended thither on his hippogriff in search of the lost wits of Orlando.

The spectacle, however, which cost enough to keep a small principality for a twelvemonth, ran only twenty-three nights, and then died of sheer exhaustion. It helped, nevertheless, to fill up the time before Christmas, when the pantomime, on the subject of "Bluebeard," raised the somewhat stagnant feeling of the play-going public.

An amusing incident occurred during one of the rehearsals of "Schamyl." A particular scene represented a cataract, above which, at a considerable elevation from the stage, a raft had to pass, occupied by three or four persons, one erect, and the others in stooping or recumbent positions. A considerable delay occurred. Mr Kean, who superintended the rehearsal, called loudly to demand the cause. No answer. "Why does not the raft come on?" Again no answer. The question being reiterated, one of the actors, who should have been at his post, at last appeared from the back of the stage, and exclaimed with excitement, "The raft is unsafe, sir; it would endanger a man's life to venture on it! I really cannot incur such a risk." Some further discussion then arose, interrupted suddenly by a loud burst of applause from all who were looking on. This was occasioned by the appearance of the raft passing.

steadily across with Mrs. Kean standing in the centre, occupying the position of the apprehensive remonstrant. We need scarcely say he was silenced by this eloquent reply.

Mistakes had been committed, and unexpected difficulties assisted also to mar the earlier part of the season. Up to this date, Mr. Kean had only appeared in the three melodramas of the "Corsican Brothers," "Faust and Marguerite," and the "Courier of Lyons," varied after Christmas by one or two occasional performances of "Hamlet," the "Stranger," and the "Iron Chest;" but on Saturday, the 13th of January, he burst on the town with renovated strength in a new drama of high legitimate nature, being an English adaptation by Mr. Dion Bourcicault, of Casimir De La Vigne's celebrated historical tragedy of "Louis the Eleventh." This play commanded sixty-two repetitions, and silenced all pertinacious denials of Mr. C. Kean's hardly won pre-eminence as the leading tragedian of the day. Even the most determined opponents at length yielded up their prejudices to the public verdict. During his long practice of twenty-eight years, he now for the first time stood before his judges in an original part of first-rate importance. The play has acquired a celebrity from his representation of the principal character, which calls upon us to dwell a little on the work and the writer.

"Louis the Eleventh" was produced at the Théâtre Français, in Paris, as far back as February, 1832, and by many French critics was held to be the masterpiece of its author. Casimir De La Vigne, it will be remembered, died towards the end of the year 1843, aged only forty-nine. He was a prolific writer, and one of the most popular of the modern poets of his country. Noble and inspiring sentiments are embodied in his

verses; his characters, particularly when taken from history, are drawn with fidelity, severe truth, individual precision, and graphic distinctness. He never alters a portrait, which flattery might soften and render more agreeable by keeping in the background, or subduing altogether, prominent but repulsive features; and he seldom suffers himself to be seduced into the substitution of mere grace and elegance in place of the vigorous thought and strong sentiment which, though less pleasing and attractive, are better calculated to leave a lasting impression on the mind. In more than one respect, he is worthy of a comparison with Corneille. He has the same clear, consecutive reasoning, and a fair portion of the similarly remarkable faculty of condensing much meaning into a small compass. Why a dramatist possessed of this ability, and enjoying such an exalted reputation in his own country, should not have been more frequently introduced to the London boards, is a question which naturally occurs, and may be answered by a reference to the many obvious points of distinction in national taste, and to the various experiments by which it has been proved, that because a given play has met with great success in Paris, it by no means follows, as a corollary, that it must have the same good fortune in London. Contrary instances are ready in abundance.

English managers, on the other hand, are often accused of want of patriotism, or of defective judgment, in running too readily to the foreign market for the supply which may be found, of a superior quality, and to any extent, at home. A glance at the *res gestæ* of the leading London theatres for the last three or four years, or any other selected period, will show that much of this charge is unjust—that indigenious talent has not been set aside unfairly or indiscriminately—that original authors have not been too modest to ask, or managers too niggardly

to give, large sums for original plays. But the public are capricious, and do not always accept the bill thus drawn and endorsed; in which case, the contracting party who buys is in an infinitely worse predicament than he who sells. The former has probably paid something considerably over the usual price for what comes recommended under an established name, which looks imposing in an announcement, but in a commercial sense often turns out to be an empty myth. After one or two failures at home, success steps in from abroad. In fact, the French beat us systematically, in plot, construction, and what is universally understood by the term *coups de théâtre*—dramatic effects. One English writer may be an imaginative poet; another, a stern moralizer; a third, rich in epigram and satire; a fourth, an able sketcher of character; a fifth, a pungent humorist, and so on. But all these qualities count for little unless they are united with a knowledge or perception of practical effect. We do not mean such mechanical contrivances as a trap-door or a sliding panel, a ghost or a demon, surrounded by blue or red fire, in every scene. The ingredients we consider as indispensably requisite, are passion, action, and varied incident. In the dramatic development of these agencies, our continental neighbours generally leave us behind them.

The French poet has worked the pith of his play almost entirely into the single character of the *King*. Whether this plan of a grand historical drama is sound in principle, is a question open to critical inquiry, on which very opposite opinions may be delivered; but that it demands from the actor who is called upon to embody such a conception of his author, a gigantic combination of mental and physical attributes, is an evident fact, which establishes itself without argument. Louis XI. was essentially a wicked and re-

morseless tyrant. His reign presents a complicated tissue of crime and hypocrisy, unvaried by a single act of mercy, a solitary impulse of affection, or an exceptional access of human feeling. He lived in terror, and died in despair. There is an awful lesson to be extracted from the terrible events included within the sixty years of his existence on earth, and during one third of which he was permitted to scourge his fellow-men by the exercise of unlimited power. Louis, as presented in Casimir De La Vigne's play, is drawn exclusively from history. No heightened colouring is superadded from poetry or imagination. The novelist here is not suffered to distort the true character of the monarch. Comines has depicted him with rather a lenient hand. He forgot, or pardoned, the outrage which obtained for him the cognomen of *tête bottée*. Other authorities have been less warped or delicate, and all the hideous features of his character are so familiar by description, that when reading of him, we feel the presence of the demon-man in terrible reality. In Sir Walter Scott's romance of "Quentin Durward," he is pleasant, sometimes almost amiable, and exhibits human sympathy in two or three instances. In the hands of the French dramatist, he never unbends, never relaxes for a moment from his constitutional hypocrisy, his bigotted superstition, his bloodthirsty tyranny, his doubts of every one, and his overwhelming dread of death and futurity. Louis of Valois was not naturally a coward, for he had given proofs, at least of passive valour, when he fought at Mont L'Hery; of cool self-possession, when he voluntarily placed himself in the power of Charles of Burgundy, at Peronne; and of confidence in his personal resources, when he cajoled Edward IV. of England, at Amiens, and turned aside by agile diplomacy the most dangerous invasion that had threatened France since the days of Cressy, Poitiers,

and Agincourt. The whole character, like Richard of Gloucester, his contemporary, is a compound of opposites and antitheses. He was, at the same time, trustful and suspicious, hoarding and wasteful, audacious and timid, mild of bearing and given to unbridled bursts of passion, soft of speech and relentless of heart; a violator of every oath he pledged, a breaker of every treaty to which he subscribed his name; a scoffer at religion, while he bent in terror before leaden images of saints; and to wind up all, the first French monarch who bore the title, long continued by his successors, of "the most Christian King."

To reconcile the play as much as possible to the classical unities, which are still revered in France, when what is understood by the "regular drama" is concerned, M. De La Vigne has crowded together incidents which took place at long intervals, and ends with the death of Louis, represented as immediately following that of Charles the Bold, although seven years actually interposed between the two events. The sequence of incidents is most ingeniously contrived, and except to a rigid chronologist, the anachronisms are imperceptible, and may be excused. The careless spectator, who sits to be entertained, without deep research, will not readily detect where the true chain of history is broken, and reality superseded by fiction. The characters include *Philip de Comines*, the pliant biographer; *Tristan l'Hermite*, the formidable provost-marshal; *Olivier le Dain*, the barber-minister; the amiable *Dauphin*, afterwards, and but for a short reign, Charles VIII.; and the devout ascetic, *François de Paule*, who practised in his own person the severe self-denial he recommended to others. There are also *Jacques Coitier*, the king's physician, who holds his life in his hands, the only living being he dare not do without, lest he should die

for lack of help in his disease and guilt ; and *Marie*, the gentle daughter of *Comines* ; and the fiery *Nemours*, her betrothed lover, thirsting for the blood of his father's murderer, and ready to lay down youth, life, love, and ambition, on the altar of the Moloch of revenge. These, with a group of peasants, compelled to act joy while quaking with terror, make up the list of characters.

The English adaptation, which is skilfully managed, and conveyed in easy, flowing language, follows the original with accuracy, differing only in one material point at its termination. In the French play, the pardon of *Nemours* arrives too late. He is executed ; and thus the crimes of *Louis* receive a posthumous addition, as his solitary act of penitence is too tardy to be availing. In stern moral and poetical justice, as regards the arch criminal, the catastrophe may be justified ; but as a question of which leaves the most satisfactory impression on the audience, public opinion was decidedly in favour of the change.

Of the effect produced by Mr. Kean in the character of *Louis the Eleventh*, it is more than difficult to convey an adequate description. We do not recollect anything to compare with it in recent times ; nor can we name any theatrical performance, it has ever been our fortune to witness, so totally free from blemish or objection ; sustained with such uniform power, relieved by so much variety, and altogether presented to the judgment of the public as a picture of such brilliant colouring and masterly filling up in all its different shades. Many lingering and obstinate cavillers were totally converted by this great achievement. The enthusiastic feeling of the house on the first night reminded us of the excitement we had witnessed during the best days of his father's *Othello*. Even when the play was over, and he lay dead before the audience, they trembled lest he

should start up again, and work fresh mischief with the revived influence of a ghoul or a vampire. Mr. Kean is not, in "Louis the Eleventh," as in the "Wife's Secret," supported by his accomplished partner, in a part of dramatic strength and interest superior to his own. The play wants the controlling charm which attaches to a prominent heroine. There is nothing here to assist the single actor; he must create his levers for himself. The character of *Louis* is so far beyond sympathy, so utterly repulsive, that in the hands of a coarse or clumsy artist, it would be unendurable. The secret of the true effect lies in the relief and variety; and the knowledge of these grand arcana marks the distinction between mediocrity and excellence. Herein lie the mystery and mastery of genius, whether exemplified by the painter, the poet, or the actor; and in the management of these resources, always thrown in at the critical moment, and in the right place, as a skilful general arranges his reserves, Mr. C. Kean carried his audience completely along with him, and swept away objections which a monotonous manner would have rendered fatal. The character, as he wielded it, became as plastic as the clay in the hands of the modeller, and, with every slight movement, presented a new feature. Looking to the past, we cannot readily select any actor of former days who could have competed with the living representative. Great requisites they had, but seldom or never so many combined;—the quick, piercing eye, the flexible intonation, the expressive features, the compact, manageable figure; the rapid action; the varying conception; and the same extraordinary facility of depicting the weakness of age, the exhaustion of physical pain, and the gradual approaches of death. On this occasion the press echoed the decision of the public, with scarcely a dissentient voice. "Louis the

Eleventh" was acted for sixty-two nights during the first season of its production, and has ever since continued one of the most attractive plays on the permanent list. Mr. Kean received many congratulatory letters, written by judges whose testimony was valuable, and from which the following are selected, without order of date:—

From COLONEL THE HON. SIR CHARLES PHIPPS, K.C.B.

"Buckingham Palace,
"Feb. 20th, 1855.

"MY DEAR KEAN,—

"I wished very much to have seen you last night, but I could not leave my two young ladies without a *chaperon*. I wished to have told you, whilst my admiration was boiling, how admirable I thought your personification of *Louis the Eleventh*. I consider it the finest piece of acting that I have seen in my experience. I can understand the possibility of the passionate scenes being equalled *perhaps*, magnificent as they are. But the way in which you managed to identify *your mind* with the double character you had to portray, is to me an excellence in art which is wonderful. There appeared to be no look, no gesture, no tone of voice, that was not that of a cruel, cowardly old man. Any one who knows you in private life must feel *how much of art* there must be in this. You have known me often a sincere critic; you will, I am sure, believe in the truth of my admiration. If I had time I would go much into detail upon this piece of acting, which kept my cheeks burning with excitement, whilst my lower man was, like the King's, in the 'Arabian Nights,' marble from the cold.

"I may tell you that the opinion of your performance is equally high upon the part of my royal mistress and

master. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Kean. I hope she keeps well.

“Sincerely yours,
“C. B. PHIPPS.”

From SAMUEL WARREN, ESQ., M.P.

“35, Woburn Place, Russell Square,
“19th January, 1855.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“Permit me to thank you cordially for the unbounded delight which you afforded all my family last night, by your splendid representation of *Louis the Eleventh*. They hardly know how to express themselves, such is the sort of infatuation with which you have filled them; and they will not hear of my returning to chambers this morning before I write to say how greatly they are obliged to you. . . . This is Term-time, and my evenings are uncertain; but it shall go hard if I do not, in a day or two, find myself in the stalls. I am most impatient to go; and to such a piece as that of last night, infinitely prefer going alone.

“I hope you will allow me to present you and Mrs. Kean with a copy of the new edition of “*Ten Thousand a Year*,” which I have rigorously revised throughout.

“I am, my dear Sir,
“Yours, very much obliged,
“SAMUEL WARREN.”

“Sir F. Thesiger and his family were there last night.”

From W. FARREN, ESQ.

“Jan. 23d, 1855.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“I return you a thousand thanks for one of the greatest entertainments I have (as an old actor) experienced for years. The best opinion I can give of

your performance of *Louis the Eleventh*, is to reiterate the criticisms of my friend the *Critic*. Wishing you many years of health to repeat such representations, I have much pleasure in signing myself

“Your sincere admirer,

“WILLIAM FARREN.”

From MISS ISABELLA GLYN.

“13, Brook Street, Grosvenor Square.

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“Indeed I highly value your kindness in affording me the opportunity of witnessing your rare performances as often as I can. Work will soon preclude me from that enjoyment very often, so I at once avail myself of your generosity and ask for a box for next Friday. If last Friday was not one of your grandest nights, what then must you be when self-pleased! You were great. We all felt very distressed about that noise, for I know how deeply hurt you would be by it; but you soon lost us to all but your wonderful powers. I have not a doubt but that the seeming coldness of the audience arose from an inability to applaud you. Your intensity is really terrible. I felt white with excitement, and caught myself holding by the chairs, grasping tightly for comfort, for I could scarcely breathe, and could not applaud until I was enough recovered to remember you were acting. I could write pages on every part of your great work. But your entire dying scene, how true and affecting it was. That crawling to the crown with no physical power, but with a deadly yet real energy, makes my flesh creep now only to think of it. I am reluctant not to dwell on this longer, but must cease to intrude upon your valuable time, and patience too, as I fear I do.

“Yours, very obliged and admiringly,

“ISABELLA GLYN.”

From MRS. HOWITT.

"The Hermitage, Highgate Rise,
"Jan. 23rd.

"MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

"You are quite prepared, I am sure, to hear that we were delighted, last night, by your new character, for you must yourself be aware of its extraordinary power and elaboration. We were astonished, for it exceeded our expectations, and we expected a great treat. It was unquestionably one of the most wonderfully conceived impersonations that was ever given. There is no halting in it, it falls short in no way of the perfection of nature, and one's very blood runs cold at the realized villainy, hypocrisy, and cowardice of the character. It is a master-piece in your hands, and we congratulate you not only on your success, but on the possession of such creative power.

"We longed to say as much to you last night, and to have shaken hands with Mrs. Kean, whom we saw on the other side of the theatre, but she was not in her box between the acts, nor after the play, and we would not miss a single word. However, receive our thanks for a very great pleasure, and with our united regards to you both,

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"MARY HOWITT."

From SAMUEL LOVER, ESQ.

"43, Denbigh Street, Warwick Square,
"25th Jan., 1855.

MY DEAR KEAN,—

"Though you must by this time be almost weary of eulodation of your *Louis the Eleventh*, I cannot resist the

pleasure of thanking you for the intellectual enjoyment your performance of Saturday last afforded me. In conception most artistic; in execution masterly. May many more such triumphs lie before you.

“Yours faithfully,

“SAMUEL LOVER.”

From J. PALGRAVE SIMPSON, ESQ.

“9, Alfred Place West, Thurlow Square, Brompton,
“15th Jan., 1855.

“MY DEAR MRS. KEAN,—

“I called at your house yesterday in the hope of seeing you, but to my disappointment I heard that you were all gone out. Perhaps I ought not, however, to say ‘disappointment,’ since the fact convinced me that Mr. Kean was not so much exhausted as I feared he would have been from his tremendous exertions the previous day. Pray present him, what I could not give by word of mouth, my heartfelt congratulations upon the triumph he has achieved. I am pleased to find that such papers as I have seen, coincide entirely with me in the sentiment that his performance was one of the greatest histrionic displays ever witnessed on the English stage. I myself am enthusiastic about him. I have scarcely yet recovered from my state of over-excitement and the intensity of emotion which the performance produced upon me. You know my extreme fondness for the stage, and you may guess with what gratification I witnessed acting in which it is impossible to find one movement that does not completely sympathise with one’s own feelings; impossible to see anything but perfection. I wish my opinion could be worth, in your eyes, what that of many better and higher men must be, that I might give my return to Mr. Kean for the *great, great* gratification he has afforded

ne. One reason for my wishing to see you was, to ask whether you or Mr. Kean had any commands for Paris, or which place I start to-morrow evening, per mail train. If I can do anything, will you please let me know. With kind regards to Mr. Kean and very wish for your joint success and prosperity,

“Yours very sincerely,

“J. PALGRAVE SIMPSON.”

The success of “Louis the Eleventh” established a decisive period in Mr. C. Kean’s career as an actor. It was so remarkable for the winding up of a determined opposition, which had hitherto accompanied every new play produced under his management. A small knot of enemies congregated together on all these occasions, and took post in different parts of the theatre, acting by signals under preconcerted arrangement. Whenever the great majority of the house applauded, they intermingled the note of disapprobation, and frequently marred the effect of the most telling passages by premeditated noises, so ingeniously contrived as to appear accidental. The best points of the finest acting may be destroyed by a cough or a sneeze, thrown in at the exact moment, as effectually as by the virulent hiss, which cannot always be ventured with equal safety. During the run of “Richard the Third,” the practice was so apparent, and so evidently against the feeling of the audience, that Mr. Kean, accompanied by his acting manager, waited on Sir R. Mayne, with a view to the adoption of protective measures. The police officers on duty in the theatre, declared their conviction that a conspiracy undoubtedly existed, but so organized that they were unable to detect it. When the individuals thus engaged felt that they were under surveillance or had become obnoxious to the public generally, they never showed

front, but immediately left the theatre or remained silent for the rest of the evening. After the second or third repetition of "Louis the Eleventh" they finally disappeared, either from exhausted funds or in despair of carrying their object. These matters may appear unintelligible to those who have never had occasion to fathom the full extent of personal pique or jealousy. In the present instance,

" Imputation and strong circumstances
Which lead directly to the door of truth,"

point to the suspected parties; but in the absence of positive proof we abstain from the most remote inference. They know themselves, and may be assured that they are known. This remark can offend none but those who are conscious of its application. "Qui capit, ille facit."

CHAPTER VII.

A GAME OF ROMPS—THE MULETEER OF TOLEDO—HOW STOUT YOU'RE GETTING—REVIVAL OF SHAKESPEARE'S KING HENRY THE EIGHTH, AND RETURN OF MRS. C. KEAN TO THE STAGE—CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE PLAY AND PERFORMANCE—MR. C. KEAN'S CARDINAL WOLSEY; MRS. C. KEAN'S QUEEN KATHARINE—UNPRECEDENTED ATTRACTION, AND RUN OF ONE HUNDRED CONSECUTIVE NIGHTS—ACTING SUPERIOR TO PAGEANTRY—PUBLICATION OF HENRY THE EIGHTH, WITH PREFACE AND NOTES—RESTORED SCENES AND NEW STAGE ARRANGEMENTS—CONDENSATION OF THE FIFTH ACT—END OF THE SEASON—DIFFICULTIES SURMOUNTED—CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS AND GENERAL SUMMARY.

SUBSEQUENTLY to the production of "Louis the Eleventh," three light pieces were brought forward at the Princess's, during the season of 1854-5, from the pen of Mr. J. M. Morton, author in ordinary to the establishment. "A Game of Romps," the "Muleteer of Toledo," and "How Stout You're Getting," were all of French origin, freely adapted, and met with the usual ephemeral success. Why does not this easy, agreeable writer extend his ambition, trust more to his own resources, invoke the spirit of his father, and try his hand at an original comedy? We have had none that bids for immortality since Sir Bulwer Lytton's "Money."* The field is still open and productive; a rich harvest might yet be gathered by followers of the

* The title and subject of this fine play are, and ever will be, universally applicable; and must ensure enduring popularity, despite the fluctuating caprices of fashion, while the wit of Congreve and Sheridan is remembered, and their language spoken.

same school. "A Game of Roms," the first of the three trifles alluded to above, came out on the 12th of March. The French piece from which it is taken bears the title of "Les Jeux Innocents." It was a mere sketch, with little or no plot, deriving attraction almost exclusively from the personal charms of the ladies included in the cast, and the humour of Harley, who played a sort of French *Dominie Sampson*, in which he was measured to the life. The piece altogether was an improvement on the original. In Paris there were some amongst the bevy of intended graces the very opposite of attractive. At the Princess's they were, without exception, dangerously beautiful. These short, one-act introductions, so much in fashion in the present day, are very available for the purpose of playing in the audience, and setting them in good humour for the more important business that is to follow. They are built exclusively on smart dialogue, quick repartee, and comic situation. From these ingredients a preliminary half-hour of exciting merriment is often gained, particularly if there is no studied determination to be funny, the transparent labour of which clogs and defeats the most zealous aspirations of humorous writers and their exponents. A spectator or listener never thoroughly enjoys a joke unless he feels it to be spontaneous, natural, arising from the circumstances of the case, and born of itself. Then he laughs heartily, and, having got into the true vein, seldom pulls up until his gallop is exhausted. But if he perceives that the author and actors are flagging, or exhausting themselves in painful attempts to produce hilarity, not to be extracted from the materials with which they are working, he soon becomes inoculated with their heaviness, and his mirth evaporates in a yawn. "A Game of Roms" was entirely divested of this damaging characteristic.

The "Muleteer of Toledo," designated in the bills as a "romance" in two acts, was selected for the Easter novelty.* In its original form as an opera, much of the action was carried on through the medium of M. Adolphe Adam's popular music. In the English alteration we had humour for melody, and smart epigrammatic dialogue in place of long-concerted pieces and interminable finales, in which the words, supposed and intended to be interpreters of the sense, are too often smothered up in lyrical evolutions, revolutions, inflexions, and variations. Whether this change is an improvement forms a question for a critical jury; but if they were impanneled from an Easter Monday audience, there can be little doubt that the verdict would be unanimous in favour of the laugh. During that season of merriment a joke would carry the day against a bravura, without hesitation.

"How Stout You're Getting" turns entirely on the distress of a fat little gentleman, *Mr. Plummy*, a chemist and druggist, who has no idea that he is becoming corpulent, until constantly reminded by his wife and others that he expands daily in circumference and weight, as a natural consequence of indolent and gormandising habits. Mr. D. Fisher, as *Plummy*, deserved the highest praise, not only for his humour but for the physical exhaustion he so loyally sustained—no trivial matter in the dog days, with the thermometer at 90°. To combine the bulk of an incipient *Falstaff* with the agility of *Harlequin* is more easily conceived than executed.

A combination of two important events in Mr. C.

* The same subject has since acquired additional reputation with Balfe's music, as the "Rose of Castile," so successfully produced by the English Operatic Company under the management of Miss Pyne and Mr. Harrison.

Kean's individual management, and in general theatrical history, occurred on Wednesday evening, the 16th of May, 1855, by the production of Shakespeare's "King Henry the Eighth," and the re-appearance of Mrs. C. Kean, after a long secession of nearly a year and a half, occasioned through severe and constantly recurring illness. It had been currently reported and believed that she had retired altogether into private life. The rumour gained strength with time, and anxiety increased as months rolled by and no announcement appeared of the return of the highly gifted lady whose absence was so severely felt. The apprehension of her loss was also augmented by the conviction that no rising star had given evidence of power, either present or prospective, to fill the much regretted vacancy. The recent recruits were not of a standard to justify their being placed in the front rank. There might be some promising candidates ready for judgment, but as yet they were unenlisted. Every great artist is looked upon as public property, and all members of society are jealous of their share in what they regard as common right. When Garrick went to Italy, a young performer named Powell sprang up unexpectedly, and stopped the gap with so much success, that Lacy wrote to his partner, telling him there was not the least occasion to hurry himself or abridge his intended tour. This intelligence brought the apprehensive Roscius back at double speed, trembling lest his laurels should be in danger. When Garrick retired, Henderson and John Kemble stepped forward, well trained and gifted, to compete for the vacant throne. When Kemble's hour of repose arrived, there were Young, who had long reflected his style, and Edmund Kean, who had converted half its worshippers. As Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Yates successively waned, Mrs. Siddons rose in her meridian

splendour, and eclipsed them all. When she too withdrew, there was Miss O'Neill ready to step into her place. We could not point to any living luminary likely to console us for the loss of Mrs. Charles Kean. In addition to her acknowledged professional supremacy, a warmth of regard and respect attaches to her personal character, which gave to the enthusiastic plaudits that resounded through the house as she entered, and were long continued, the appearance rather of the greetings of private friends than the mere delight expressed by a promiscuous audience at once more seeing before them, restored to health and in full possession of her powers, one of the brightest ornaments that has ever graced the theatrical profession. With her return, the Princess's Theatre recovered the full lustre which her long absence had somewhat eclipsed, while the drama in general regained a most important pillar of strength.

Much diversity of opinion has been indulged in by learned commentators as to the merit of "King Henry the Eighth" in comparison with the rest of Shakespeare's historical plays. Many consider it the best, as it is the last, and most carefully constructed, both in regard to the facts introduced, and the powerful contrast with which the leading characters are opposed to each other. The age was one of unparalleled magnificence—a taste fed and encouraged by the personal habits of the two monarchs of France and England. The latter nation in particular, then as now, richer than its neighbours, spared no expense in shows, entertainments, and apparel. A nobleman of that day carried half a year's revenue on his back whenever he appeared in full state. We are greatly advanced in our notions and practice of domestic comfort, elegance, and convenience, but we cannot rival our ancestors in outward display. In festivals and banquets, too, they vied with royalty itself, and were as

lavish as Apicius, who committed suicide after the high Roman fashion, when his steward announced to him that the cash in his strong box was reduced to 250,000 crowns, sufficient in his estimation for only one supper more.

If there is less of stirring action, of the din and vicissitude of war, of hero painting and ambitious rivalries, of plots, conspiracies, rebellions, conquests, and political reverses in "Henry the Eighth," than in the plays illustrating earlier and more unsettled reigns, there is a much greater infusion of pomp and pageantry, an increased gorgeousness of detail, mingled with passages of exquisitely imaginative poetry, which compete with any that have proceeded from the same magic pen. The two most prominent characters, the *Queen* and the *Cardinal*, require powers of the very highest order, mental rather than physical, and can only be rendered truthful and effective in proportion as the representatives throw aside stage conventionalities or hereditary adoption, and study them from the features so minutely delineated in the histories and chronicles from whence Shakespeare derived the sources of his own inspiration. Many of the most important scenes are so faithfully rendered, that the substance and even the words of the dialogue are not altered, but merely heightened by the glowing genius of the poet into harmonious verse. The defect of the play lies in the anti-climax at the end, the total cessation of interest in the fifth act. After the fall of *Wolsey* and the death of *Queen Katharine*, the action ceases. And yet to drop the curtain on the latter incident had always been found somewhat incomplete when the experiment was tried. Then, again, the long and disconnected introduction of the scenes in which *Crammer* is concerned was pronounced also to be insufferably wearisome. We take no interest in a sub-

ordinate character we have not seen before, and who is brought in at the fag end to supply the place of the more attractive principals who have vanished from the scene. However venerable in history, the illustrious archbishop is not entertaining on the stage. We remember well the yawns and lassitude of the audiences in the days of the Kembles, throughout this interminable episode, from which not even the traditional buffooneries of Bishop Gardiner in his forced reconciliation with the Primate, or the following glories of the christening, could effectually revive them.

In the arrangement of "*Henry the Eighth*," which embraces a period of twelve years, Shakespeare has indulged in two or three deviations from chronology, for which he has been loudly condemned. The most important of these is placing the death of *Queen Katharine* before the birth and christening of the *Princess Elizabeth*. He did this, not from ignorance or carelessness, as ready censurers have supposed, but to wind up his play more agreeably than if he had closed with a tragic incident; and to introduce a panegyric on the reigning queen, under whose patronage he wrote, and who was, if possible, more punctilious in her extreme old age, more exacting in obsequious homage, and more swayed by flattery, than she had been in the meridian of her power and womanhood. The poet had another delicate task to accomplish in the delineation of *Henry the Eighth* himself. It was necessary to render him respectable at least, if not amiable, and neither point would be attained without steering far beyond the latitude of truth. Shakespeare, however, compromised the difficulty with tolerable success, by selecting a portion of the sensual tyrant's life the least open to broad objection.

If, five years earlier, Mr. C. Kean had said to any given circle of listeners, "I will bring out a play of

Shakespeare, and one not hitherto generally popular, and I will run that play one hundred nights to crowded houses," the company present would have smiled in unanimous unbelief, and would have answered (or, if courtesy chained their tongues, they would have uttered in thought), "The thing is an empty chimera, and the enthusiast who dreams of it as a practical reality, is a candidate for Hanwell or St. Luke's. How is it possible that you, a degenerate modern, should fancy you can accomplish what Garrick and the Kembles never thought of undertaking? And with Shakespeare, too, who is obsolete and out of fashion, unsuited to the taste of the day! A text book, if you like, but one seldom opened except as a reference, to settle a dispute, or verify a quotation."

Well, the experiment was tried, and succeeded. The attempt and completion became realized facts, to be quoted by future generations, in writing or speaking of the stage, as one of the most marvellous incidents connected with the subject on which they dilate;—a landmark in dramatic chronology. A Shakespearean play *did* run for one hundred consecutive nights, with the exception only of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean's benefit, when a change of performance was substituted as a compliment to their immediate patrons and friends. The nearest *approach* to this great attraction occurred in the instance of "Macbeth," at this same theatre in 1853, and when Miss Fanny Kemble came to the rescue of Covent Garden in the season of 1829—30, on which occasion "Romeo and Juliet" produced upwards of forty attractive repetitions. It could not be the pageantry, the procession, the banquet, or the scenery, that achieved this great triumph; as much, and even more, of all those embellishments, and at a greater cost, had been bestowed on the same subject at earlier revivals. Before, and during

the period of Garrick's management, "Henry the Eighth" was on the acting list, and selected as a vehicle for costly expenditure seldom reimbursed. We read of its running twenty nights at Drury Lane, in the early part of 1728, to houses which scarcely paid the expense, and were principally attracted by the magnificence of a coronation, introduced as a *fac-simile* of that of George II., who had just ascended the throne. Booth acted the *King*, which in those days was considered the principal part, and Colley Cibber was the *Wolsey*—a character for which he had no single requisite. 1,000*l.* was expended on the coronation scene alone—a very large sum more than a century ago. But what was this, or any recent outlay, compared to the 100,000*l.*, which the Athenians are said to have lavished on a single tragedy of Euripides? "Henry the Eighth" was also a favourite play during the reign of the Kembles. The writer of these pages, in conversation with Charles Kemble on this particular subject, has more than once been told by him that it was the most costly and least remunerative of all the great revivals under his brother's superintendence. What, then, could have produced the superior attraction in 1855? Assuredly not the expenditure and show, for they had been equalled, if not surpassed, before. Let us deal justly, and say, it must have been the extraordinary combination of all the highest elements of art, until then, neither sought for nor employed with the same happy discrimination. The result belongs to the life-painting, the vivid resurrection of persons, places, and events—the severe, undeviating accuracy of historic research, rather than to dumb pictorial accompaniments, however appropriate and imposing, or to new mechanical appliances, with all their marvellous ingenuity. The *acting* is the oil that feeds the lamp, and without that rich pabulum in ample supply, the light would soon fade into "darkness visible."

In a single season the characters of *Wolsey* and *Queen Katharine* were played by Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean oftener than by their greatest predecessors during a career of thirty years. This was a fact which the most resolute detractors were unable to dispute, although pertinacious in spirit, while few in number, and clinging to their own notions with the dogged obstinacy of prejudice, determined to be wrong. From this time forward they slackened and declined. Mr. Kean had now so firmly established his position, had won such golden opinions from an overwhelming majority, that he had no occasion to heed a few dissentient voices, which finally lost themselves in their own clamour.

The usual "fly-leaf" with which Mr. C. Kean had accompanied his earlier Shakespearean restorations was affixed to the bills of "*Henry the Eighth*;" but this time both play and preface escaped burlesque. Either the usual indulgers of that practice were conscience-stricken, or the vulgar resource had lost its popularity. With reference to his alterations, Mr. Kean said: "In the revival of '*Henry the Eighth*,' it will be perceived that I have ventured to differ from the stage arrangements of my predecessors. Although in their time fine scenic effects were produced, and much pageantry was displayed, the management did not attempt, nor did the public require, that scrupulous adherence to historical truth in costume, architecture, and the multiplied details of action, which modern taste demands, and is so capable of appreciating, when employed in the service of the monarch of dramatic poetry." The notice wound up with the following sentence:—"I cannot conclude without an allusion to Mrs. Charles Kean's return to the stage, after a long secession, occasioned by severe illness. It is only thus that I can record my appreciation of the compliment she has received in the voluntary proposal

of the ladies of the company, not representing characters in the play, to appear as her 'Ladies in Waiting.' Such an offer is the more valuable, as it combines a graceful expression of personal esteem with a zealous desire to uphold the interests of the theatre."

The revival of "Henry the Eighth" was accompanied by a printed edition of the play as then acted, with historical and explanatory notes by Mr. C. Kean. The books were sold in the theatre alone, for the exclusive accommodation of its frequenters, and above 6,000 copies were thus circulated. The plan has since been continued with all the subsequent Shakespearean restorations, in an unbroken series. These plays, in a collected form, are now in course of publication by Messrs. Bradbury and Evans. They are highly valuable in a literary sense, and may be strongly recommended as eligible studies for the more youthful readers of the dramatic master; the text being carefully preserved, and assiduously purified from all objectionable passages or expressions.

The new acting version of "Henry the Eighth" must be considered here with regard to its fitness for representation. It was not ventured as a critical liberty, or an ambitious experiment to improve Shakespeare as he wrote; but as a zealous effort to place the poet on the stage for which he composed, to the best advantage, and with the reality which he conceived and intended, although without a hope of seeing the accomplishment with his own eyes. In doing this, it is equally permissible as necessary to curtail or restore; while true taste shrinks from any attempt to alter or amend with arbitrary judgment, too often regulated by caprice or biassed perception. Mr. C. Kean cannot be too much commended for the care with which he has preserved the genuine text of Shakespeare, as well as for the re-intro-

duction of some noble passages, to the exclusion of others of infinitely less beauty and importance. The notes bespeak depth of research, and the scrupulous regard for truth by which even the most trifling improvement was held in abeyance, until supported by unquestionable authority. No names are assigned without a stated reason, and characters are no longer blended for stage convenience (such, for instance, as *Cromwell* and *Griffith*), which Shakespeare, following history, had distinctly separated. The error has been too often indulged by managers of high pretensions in earlier days, when a punctilious observance of all these details was less imperative than modern taste requires, and values in proportion. A printed book of Mr. C. Kean's "Henry the Eighth" was absolutely called for to convey the full account of all the startling novelties that were introduced into this fine drama. As everybody went to see it acted, so almost every one who could command a spare shilling purchased a book, that he might recall at his ease, in his arm-chair, the succession of dazzling scenes which had so enchanted his faculties in the theatre. Many persons have a passion for reading while they are assisting (as the French say) at the performance. We have no right to quarrel with individual taste, but we cannot commend this habit, except in the case of an Italian opera, or a performance in French or German, where the difficulty of following the foreign idiom often demands reference to a present interpreter. A dramatic representation is intended to strike directly through the medium of the eye; but if the eye is constantly wandering to a page, more than half the effect is lost. The reader who is looking on his book instead of on the stage, may occasionally find that *an* actor has tripped in the text, or detect him in substituting *and* for *but*. He has made a point

against him, as a critic, it is true ; but he loses in intellectual enjoyment much more than he can possibly gain by the discovery of an unimportant fact. The appearance of a line of students, too, operates as an embarrassing check on the energies of the performer. We have seen *Othello* sink suddenly from the height of frenzied passion to dead apathy, when his eye fell by accident on the apparition of a grave, spectacled, elderly gentleman in the stage box, pouring over his text-book as immovably and solemnly as if he were spelling a mystified leader, or a long parliamentary debate in one of the morning papers. We therefore recommend it as a much more wholesome canon, to purchase a book by all means, but after you have witnessed the performance, and to read it carefully while at breakfast on the following day.

We are somewhat surprised to find Hazlitt, who has been often quoted as an acute Shakespearean critic, expressing himself as follows:—"The representing the very finest of Shakespeare's plays on the stage, even by the best actors, is, we apprehend, an abuse of the genius of the poet. Shakespeare has embodied his characters so very distinctly, that he stands in no need of the actor's assistance to make them more distinct." It is not very easy to understand these sentences, or to follow their meaning with satisfaction ; but we suppose they are intended to convey that Shakespeare's plays are weakened by being acted, and ought to be entirely reserved for the closet;—a startling position, which would astonish Shakespeare not a little if he could be made aware of it. As he undoubtedly wrote his plays to be acted before they were read (many of them were not printed at all during his life), for the stage in preference to the library, we may take it for granted that he knew what he meant and intended, and how to construct his own conceptions for his own selected purpose. But

these subtle commentators would fain persuade us that they are more deeply in his confidence than he was himself, and can interpret the workings of his mind with more fidelity than he has exhibited them.

The same materials from which Mr. C. Kean so laboriously studied and selected in his Shakespearean revivals were available to his predecessors. The same authorities were open to their research, and yet they disregarded, or, having casually looked into them, passed them over as of no moment. It is true that such minute historical accuracy was not then expected. General knowledge was more limited. The taste of the day satisfied itself with a bold outline, a striking feature in a few prominent situations, instead of a portrait complete in all its details. If, occasionally, a great scenic display was presented, it stood by itself; there was no attempt to carry a series of corresponding efforts throughout an entire performance. Mr. Kean is the first manager who has understood and accomplished this perfect coherence. Former generations saw "Henry the Eighth" represented with certain insulated effects—such, for instance, as the coronation of *Anne Boleyn* and the christening of her infant daughter; but they never witnessed the whole play illustrated, as now, by a succession of historical pictures, in which every person, group, and movement is modelled from life; not taken from imagination or poetical resemblance, but embodied from the minute descriptions of those who had seen, known, and lived with the characters introduced: with whom they were as familiarly acquainted as with the places they inhabited and the costumes they wore. The order of *Wolsey's* march as he is passing to the council chamber, the dazzling splendour of the banquet at York Place, the solemnity of the execution of *Buckingham*, the distribution of the court for the

trial of the divorce question between the King and *Katherine of Arragon*, the etherial beauty of the vision in the scene of her dream and death; and above all, the introduction of the highly characteristic interview between the two cajoling cardinals and their persecuted victim;—these bold and truthful innovations are exclusively the result of Mr. Kean's close examination of his subject, and are as entirely new as they are superior in value and reality to the old conventional arrangements they have so happily superseded. It is by the independent exercise of its own strength that true talent bursts from the fetters of habit and traditional routine, finding variety and power in its own innate resources.

The old mode of disposing the trial scene is perpetuated in Harlowe's celebrated picture, usually called the Kemble Family, from the number of portraits it contains of that distinguished race. The painting, we believe, has disappeared mysteriously, but the engravings are numerous and familiar. There we see the King seated on his throne in presiding dignity, and the two cardinals at the table, mixed up with the other members of council. There is nothing to mark the ecclesiastical supremacy with which the court was invested. The *Queen* stands majestically in the front. We look on an imposing group, picturesque and poetical, but conveying no true reflection of the event as it occurred. According to Mr. Kean's disposition of the stage, the two cardinals, who are appointed under special commission from Rome to try the case, are seated together on an elevated platform. The great churchmen and lawyers occupy their appointed stalls. The *King*, as plaintiff in the cause, sits on the right-hand side in front, and answers to the legal summons. The *Queen*, as defendant, enters when called for, and

takes her place on the opposite side. Here is history transferred to the boards, and blended in perfect accordance with the Shakespearcan text. Even in a dramatic sense, the present arrangement is superior to the former one.

Another and more important evidence of sound judgment was manifested in the restoration of the fine scene beginning the third act, wherein the two cardinals, by command of the *King*, visit *Queen Katharine* in her sad privacy, to try and prevail on her to consent to the divorce. How or why Mrs. Siddons could have been induced to sacrifice this valuable portion of her part we never could understand. Is it possible that John Kemble thought it interfered with his own *Wolsey*, and excised it from jealousy? If so, his discrimination was terribly at fault, and his sister's complaisance seriously marred the general interest of the play, the intention of the poet, and the rapid contrast of events his genius sought invariably to produce. At this interview, *Wolsey* is in the plenitude of his greatness. "Take heed," says the *Queen*, goaded almost to madness by his hollow importunity, "take heed, for heaven's sake, lest at once the burden of my sorrows fall upon ye." In the very next scene, the implied judgment is accomplished, and we find the king-cardinal suddenly hurled, without the slightest warning or preparation, from his high estate into misery more signal and abject than that of the helpless woman he has assisted to destroy. It would be difficult to cite a more consummate instance of Shakespeare's deep insight into the moral of all human transactions, as well as his mastery over every possible variety of dramatic effect. If Kemble could have witnessed these two scenes at the Princess's Theatre, he would surely have altered his opinion, and repented of his ill-considered curtailment.

Again, we think Mr. Kean displayed the tact of a great practical artist, in cutting down the fifth act to the last scene of the christening, and by the introduction of a moving panorama, which carried us to the church of the Grey Friars at Greenwich, where that ceremony was performed. There had been already two processions; a third would be monotonous. What is gained in other parts of the play outvalues, by an immense calculation, the portions that have been cast aside. The acting has yet to be spoken of before we dismiss the subject.

Mrs. C. Kean's *Queen Katharine* gave ample evidence that during her long illness she had found intervals for study and preparation. The character could not be represented in such impressive reality without deep forethought and meditative care. It was one of the finest specimens we ever saw of what has been pronounced the perfection of acting,—art producing nature. When Mrs. Siddons in the zenith of her success called upon Dr. Johnson, he asked her “which of Shakespeare's heroines she liked best?” She answered, without hesitation, “*Queen Katharine*, because it is the most natural and feminine.” “You are right, madam,” replied the great critic, “and when you appear in that part, old and infirm as I am, I will endeavour to hobble out and see you.” Now, this is clearly Mrs. C. Kean's reading of *Queen Katharine*, and these attributes so congenial with her own, enabled her to achieve a signal triumph. A few sexagenarian playgoers may look back with proud reminiscences, hallowed by time, to the commanding figure of Mrs. Siddons, her sustained solemnity of manner, her thrilling, deep-toned utterance, her awful majesty of deportment. All these endowments we fully admit and remember; but in simple pathos, in natural bursts of indignation when urged beyond patience, in

the gentle, unartificial, and purely woman-like features of the character, we venture to say, and we hope without heresy, she is exceeded by Mrs. C. Kean. Mrs. Siddons may have commanded superior admiration, but Mrs. C. Kean touches the feelings with greater intensity. She suffers the woman to predominate over the queen, and mourns the loss of the king's affection with deeper regret than the decline from her worldly state. She is wounded in her heart more incurably than in her rank. This, we apprehend to have been Shakespeare's own view; and this, in our humble judgment was never so truthfully conveyed before, and without the restored scene, would be imperfectly attempted. We have reason to believe that this opinion in substance, and almost in the same words, has been expressed by one of Mrs. Siddons's earlier and most accomplished successors, who has long retired into the privacy of domestic life. In the dying scene, Mrs. C. Kean depicted the exhaustion of physical suffering with such artistic truthfulness, that every breath was suspended and many were the white handkerchiefs displayed as the act-drop came slowly down. The falling back after an effort to rise, and expiring in her chair, was far more natural and impressive than if she had tottered off, as heretofore, supported by her attendants. For some seconds the audience sat rivetted in absorbed attention and no sound escaped them; but as soon as the house could recover, one simultaneous burst of applause proclaimed the power of the enchantress who had spell-bound their faculties by such potent necromancy.

It would be difficult to conceive two characters more thoroughly opposed to each other than *Louis the Eleventh* and *Cardinal Wolsey*. There is craft, and cunning, and duplicity, and conscience yielding to convenience, as far as worldly matters are concerned, (Wolsey was sincere,

in his religion) in each ; but expressed after a totally different fashion. An actor of great ability might succeed in one and fail in the other ; yet Mr. C. Kean has been eminently successful in both. His versatility was never more strikingly exhibited than in these two contrasted assumptions. *Wolsey* is a difficult, perhaps an overrated character ; identified too, by the elders, with personal associations of John Kemble. The two first acts contain little beyond unimpassioned declamation, and one or two traits of individual peculiarity. In the great scene of his disgrace and fall, in the third act, the entire pith of the part is concentrated ; all that he says and does before work up to that sudden catastrophe. But this single scene contains so much in a small compass that it taxes the full powers of the actor, and none but one of first-rate pretensions can grapple with it successfully.

Mr. C. Kean does not give us the hereditary *Wolsey* of the stage after the mannerism of any preceding actor ; but the Cardinal of history, closely followed, as the poet has transferred him from the chroniclers, and with a minute attention to every small feature, in a portrait drawn with stereotyped distinctness.

It is fortunate for himself, as well as wholesome for the cause of the drama, when an actor can venture to eschew established notions, and strike into an untrodden path. Modern advancement permits this, while ancient prejudice shrank from it with holy horror. Mr. C. Kean's deviations from the established rule in *Wolsey*, were positively alarming. It may not be generally remembered, by those who have the stately mien of Kemble ever before their eyes, that the great cardinal was short in stature, and somewhat corpulent ; and although haughty and imperious with the high nobility who hated him, no man ever exceeded him in affability and courteousness of manner, when there was no political motive for

assuming a different deportment. Mr. C. Kean carefully noted all these points, and his performance throughout was marked by the varying shades of character which this consummate actor assumed, according to the circumstances in which he was placed, and the parties with whom he came in contact. Wolsey could simulate humility and self-command when it suited his purpose, but his natural temper was hot and ungovernable. The poet has invested him with a dignity and resignation in his fall, which call forth universal sympathy, until we forget his unbridled ambition and arrogance in the depth of his degradation. Mr. C. Kean gave the whole of his last scene with a most pathetic eloquence, in which nature completely triumphed over systematic habits, and truth superseded hypocrisy. His costume appeared to be taken from undoubted authorities, and so sedulously did he preserve minor details in the manners of this great child of fortune, as well as all the more important attributes, that when he crossed the stage in the first procession, he held in his hand "the hollow orange, filled with a part of a sponge, wherein was vinegar and other confections, against the pestilent airs, which Cavendish describes as his constant custom," when passing through streets or corridors, where he might be pressed on by many suitors. An old gentleman, on the first night observed to a friend, seated next to him, "Mr. Kean in many respects gives me a more perfect idea of Cardinal Wolsey, as history has described him, than any actor I have ever seen, from John Kemble to the present day."

Mr. Walter Lacy deserved much credit for his personification of *Henry the Eighth*, which he looked to a point. His "make up" was admirable, and his acting equal to it. The monarch of many wives was a fearful companion, although Shakespeare has done all that genius could effect to humanize and render him fit for

society, without departing entirely from historical facts. There was no safety for any head under such a truculent ruler; his humorous intervals were almost as dangerous as his paroxysms of rage. The part easily admits of exaggeration in the hands of a coarse or careless actor. Mr. W. Lacy is entitled to full credit for not yielding to a temptation sanctioned by respectable precedent. The author has given *Anne Boleyn* nothing to do, and little to say. Her fair representative, Miss Heath, possesses the external requisites, and satisfied the eye, which is not the least important consideration in filling up the outline of a vapid stage beauty. Mr. Ryder's *Duke of Buckingham* was well conceived and embodied. The part soon fades from the scene, but is invariably assigned to an important actor. Mr. Cooper, in the restored part of *Griffith*, spoke some beautiful speeches with great propriety and feeling. In every respect the play presented a perfect realization of history, and was universally acknowledged as such by the public, with the exception of a few constitutional sneers from the narrow minority who are never pleased, and a faint expiring groan or two from the unhappy exceptions who envy the success they can neither arrest nor attain.

On 16th July, 1855, William Farren took his final leave of the stage at the Haymarket Theatre, appearing in the second act of the "Clandestine Marriage." He retired into private life with a handsome fortune and a brilliant reputation, although the former, we suspect, had suffered a little from his managerial speculations at the Strand and the Olympic. For some years, increased infirmities had rendered him so inarticulate, that it was difficult to recognise the great actor of earlier days. The genius was still there, but the physical power was wanting to give the due effect. The *Times*, in a very eulogistic notice, added:—"It is just

possible that to many young playgoers, our praise of Mr. Farren may appear overcharged; so we will at once anticipate their objections by declaring that no frequenter of theatres of less than eight years' standing is qualified to utter an opinion on the subject."

On his last night, Farren acted only a portion of what had formerly been his great part—*Lord Ogleby*. The house was crowded. Many leading performers from various theatres testified professional respect by contributing their services, and were grouped round him for the closing scene. Miss Helen Faucit gracefully presented the veteran with a laurel wreath, and Harley flung his arms round the neck of his old stage companion. The audience, as might be expected, cheered vociferously when the curtain fell.

Mr. C. Kean's season closed on the 14th September, 1855—a season protracted to the unusual length of eleven months. The fact spoke success; but it was a success fairly wrung from the public by Herculean exertions, in the face of many incidental obstacles, sufficient to wear out ordinary enterprise, and to exhaust restricted resources. At the commencement of the winter, the theatrical horizon presented a dreary prospect. People's minds were depressed by the recent visitation of a deadly disease, preoccupied with the novelty of war, the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the Crimea, the exaggerated reports of loss and disaster, the burden of increased taxes, and the general uncertainty attendant on a complete revulsion in the usually placid routine of social life. Many families were in mourning for the loss of dear relatives who had fallen in battle; and many more trembled to look over the columns of each succeeding gazette. There was much to think of more absorbing than the ordinary relaxations or amusements of life. It was no easy task, under these circumstances, to direct public attention to the

theatre, and to retain it there, as if by magnetic attraction, throughout a long and anxious period. Mr. C. Kean accomplished this by untiring energy and perseverance, marking the most difficult year of his dramatic government by an event without parallel in the history of the stage—one hundred repetitions of a single Shakespearean play. It was difficult to decide whether the public or the manager should receive the heartiest congratulations on this extraordinary success. Mr. Kean, by what he had now done, raised such expectations as to what he would yet do, that it became more than difficult for him to keep pace with his own reputation. He had revived and restored to its pristine vigour the legitimate drama, so repeatedly said to be crumbling to extinction, and had good reason to be proud of what he had effected in defiance of potent obstacles. The public felt that they owed him much; and he, in his turn, could not fail to rely with full confidence on their steady support. We had been so long accustomed to be told that Shakespeare was buried more deeply than his own *Prospero* promised to drown his magic book, and to hear what were once called our great national theatres mourned over as mausoleums of the departed, that our satisfaction was doubled when we found the inimitable bard once more vindicating his claims to his title, and flourishing with renewed vitality. A change of local situation is of no importance. It matters little where the temple is placed, if the true divinity is worshipped within. When Æneas fled from the burning ruins of Troy, he carried his household gods with him, and found a new home for them on the hearthstone of an infant colony. Mr. Kean planted Shakespeare firmly on the boards of the Princess's Theatre, and there he was welcomed with as much warmth as if he had never moved from his earlier pedestals.

CHAPTER VIII.

RENEWAL OF MR. C. KEAN'S LEASE FOR FOUR YEARS—SEASON OF 1855-6
 AT THE PRINCESS'S—NEW FARCE OF DON'T JUDGE BY APPEARANCES—
 A WONDERFUL WOMAN—THE CRITIC—THE RIVALS—THE HEIR-AT-LAW
 —EVERY ONE HAS HIS FAULT—MRS. C. KEAN AS LADY ELEANOR IRWIN
 —PANTOMIME ON THE SUBJECT OF THE MAID AND MAGPIE—HAMLET
 —JEALOUS WIFE—LOUIS THE ELEVENTH—MERCHANT OF VENICE—
 DEATH OF THE GREAT TENOR SINGER JOHN BRAHAM—THE FIRST PRINTER,
 A NEW PLAY BY MESSRS. C. READE AND TOM TAYLOR—ARGUMENTS ON
 THE TREATMENT OF THE SUBJECT AND ITS HISTORICAL ACCURACY—
 MR. C. KEAN AS LAURENCE COSTAR—FAUST AND MARGUERITE—A
 PRINCE FOR AN HOUR—THE VICTOR VANQUISHED—REVIVAL OF THE
 WINTER'S TALE—EXTRAORDINARY RUN OF ONE HUNDRED AND TWO
 NIGHTS—MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN AS LEONTES AND HERMIONE—CLOSE
 OF THE SEASON—MR. C. KEAN'S ADDRESS—NUMBER OF SHAKESPEAREAN
 PERFORMANCES—DEATH OF MADAME VESTRIS.

UP to the date of which we have now arrived, Mr. C. Kean had paid considerably above 6,000*l.* to living authors of high repute for various dramatic novelties; but the results had not answered his expectations. Shakespeare was evidently his trusting point, and to that inexhaustible mine he determined henceforward to look, for the substantial reward of his labours, and the artistic reputation he valued even more than profit.

His lease of the Princess's Theatre terminated on the 31st of July, 1855; but he had a stipulated condition enabling him to renew on the same terms for an additional four years, by giving six months' notice. This clause, on mature deliberation, he determined to avail himself of, and laid his plans accordingly. The ensuing engagements were all made for the full term. It was

ever a point in Mr. Kean's system to have as few changes in his company as possible. He knew the value of forces accustomed to work together, and the advantages to be derived from constant association. The most important addition to the company consisted of Mr. Frank Matthews, who joined from the Lyceum, where he had long enlisted under the banners of Madame Vestris, and Mr. C. Mathews.

The season at the Princess's opened on the 22d of October. The performances commenced with a new farce in one act, by Mr. J. M. Morton, entitled "Don't Judge by Appearances;" an agreeable trifle, well selected to usher in the stately splendour of "Henry the Eighth." After one hundred repetitions, this noble drama came again before the public as fresh and attractive as during its first run. The christening and diorama were now omitted.

On the 27th of October, Mr. C. Dance's clever little comedy of "A Wonderful Woman," was performed, to introduce Mr. Frank Matthews in a part originally played by him,—*Crepin* the cobbler. This he followed by *Sir Fretful Plagiary* in the "Critic." The reception of the new actor (new to the boards he was then treading) testified the warm satisfaction of the audience at seeing him enrolled in the ranks, where he has since filled a conspicuous place.

"Henry the Eighth" continued to be performed for fifty additional nights before it was finally laid aside. During the early part of the season, the old comedies of the "Rivals," the "Heir-at-Law," and "Every One has his Fault," were revived in succession, and afforded opportunities of showing the general strength of the company to much advantage. It would be difficult to select three more opposite specimens of distinct schools. Sheridan, Colman, and Mrs. Inchbald, have little in

common except a thorough knowledge of stage effect, and the conventional technicalities, which form, what we may call the rudiments of dramatic authorship. Mrs. Inchbald has not the sparkling wit of Sheridan, the rich humour of Colman, or the power of grouping together incidental eccentricities, which the more desultory habits of man's life supply him with in greater abundance than a female writer can have opportunities of acquiring from personal experience.

Changes of taste, as regard dramatic composition, have become almost as rapid as the varying fashions of our garments. What pleased our fathers, and grandfathers, finds, with few exceptions, but scanty favour with their more fastidious descendants. Whether the stage has improved or deteriorated in consequence of these multiplied and ever recurring revolutions is a question difficult to decide ; and which, like many others of higher importance, may be argued to infinity, without arriving at a satisfactory conclusion ; and fortunate it is that such diversity of opinion should continue to exist. Were it otherwise, we should be continually jostling each other in an uncomfortable crowd, if we all travelled together on the one narrow highway of this over-populous world. As it is, every one chooses a path for himself, in which to indulge his own peculiar bent. By some the revival of an old comedy is considered a relief and a treat ; by others it is condemned as an uncalled-for resurrection, and "a bore." We plead guilty to the charge of ranking ourselves with the former class, even at the risk of being pronounced old and "slow," and behind the era in which we live. Even on the score of contrast, if for nothing else, the occasional change is welcome. "Every One has his Fault," at the Princess's Theatre was principally remarkable for the performance of Mrs. C. Kean, as *Lady Eleanor Irwin*. To a reader of the play, the

character appears trivial. She seldom appears on the scene, and what she says has nothing in it beyond the simplest expression of her attachment to her husband and children, with her distress at the common misery in which they are involved. There are no stilts, no tragic inflation, and no overwhelming bursts of passion; but there is natural feeling and pathos, in the delineation of which Mrs. C. Kean has never been surpassed. Mrs. Inchbald's comedy consists of dialogue rather than action. The language is easy and pleasing, but never rises into brilliant wit. The speeches do not sparkle with epigrammatic point, neither do the characters exhibit the strong contrast of humour that tells so amazingly in the broader scenes of the "Heir-at-Law." The lady's play is one of a school, which stands midway between the sentimental and the grotesque. The serious portion is certainly overstrained, yet it embraces nothing that might not occur. Fact is often more extraordinary than the wildest romance. The ingredients of the drama will be cut down to a very circumscribed allowance if nothing is to be included but what can be reconciled to ordinary rules. No one disputes the beautiful and natural simplicity which gives the charm to Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield." Yet the incidents crowded together at the close are improbable to the last extreme. The novel writer and the dramatist are surely entitled to the same latitude.

The usual pantomime appeared at Christmas with the usual success. The subject this year was selected by Mr. Morton from the well-known story of the "Maid and the Magpie."

On the 17th of February, 1856, died in London, John Braham, who for more than half a century had been acknowledged as the first English tenor, without a rival. His age was said to be seventy-nine. It could not

possibly be less, and might have been more, for at the time of his death he had been sixty-six years before the public. He made his first appearance at the Royalty Theatre, through the interest of his relative and teacher, Mr. Leoni, when scarcely fifteen; and this must have been somewhere about the year 1790. In 1796, being then a full-grown man, he came out at Drury Lane, in the new opera of "Mahmoud," in which John Kemble played the hero. This was the last opera composed by Storace, and was acted fifteen times. The young singer made a most favourable impression, and never afterwards lost his ground. Braham took no formal leave of the stage, although for several years before his death he had ceased to act. At Exeter Hall and other concerts, he continued to sing almost to the last, and though uncertain, sometimes blazed out with surprising power. He amassed a large fortune, and lived in splendid style, entertaining the first company in the land; but in evil hour he entered into speculative management at the St. James's and the Colosseum, in both of which he sank large sums of money. When examined before the committee of the House of Commons, on the Dramatic Question, in 1832, he was asked amongst other interrogatories, whether he had ever been a manager, to which he answered emphatically, "No, thank heaven!" If he had never been tempted from this resolve, he would have lived and died a richer man. But greater names than his have been coupled with more flagrant inconsistency. The Duke of Wellington said in the House of Lords that he must be mad before he would undertake the duties of prime minister. Yet he was installed in the office not long after he volunteered this declaration.

On Monday, the 3d of March, 1856, a new play in three acts was produced, entitled the "First Printer," the subject of which is embodied in the title. An

original composition, with no French leaven, but all genuine English. The authors, Messrs. Charles Reade, and Tom Taylor (dramatists of established repute), adopt the Dutch version of the origin of typography, and ascribe the exclusive invention to Laurence Costar, sacristan of the Cathedral at Haarlem. While setting aside the more recognized claim of John Gutenberg of Mentz, they have even drawn the latter as a common pilferer, and trader in goods dishonestly obtained. In a preliminary notice affixed to the bill, it was stated that they founded their opinion on the faith of a tale handed down by Adrian Junius, the celebrated antiquary, and principal of Haarlem College. According to this gossip, one Master Cornelius, a bookbinder, who died in 1516, recollected and told how a certain John, who worked with him in the employment of Costar, when they were both lads, broke into the shop and abstracted the printing apparatus, flying to Mentz, where he set up on his own account. "If this story be true," say Messrs. Reade and Taylor, "it follows from the uncontested facts of the history of printing in Mentz, that this John could have been no other than one of the Gutenbergs." We confess that we cannot see the logic of this assumed conclusion, but look upon it as resting on a shadowy basis. That the Dutch legend presents preferable points of dramatic effect, would seem more like an argument, however the alleged facts may deviate from historical truth. The question has given rise to much controversy, and is likely to remain unsettled.

If we are to judge by such evidence as has reached us, it appears most likely that the first conception of printing emanated from Costar, who invented wooden blocks. With these, he printed, about the year 1438, and a very short time before his death (which took place in 1439, at the age of sixty-nine), a book of images and letters,

entitled "*Speculum Humanæ Salvationis*;" and compounded a species of ink, more glutinous and less likely to blot than that in common use. The leaves of this book were printed on one side only, and afterwards pasted together. Gutenberg improved most materially on the idea of Costar, by the invention of moveable wooden types, which Peter Schæffer carried to the perfection of the cast metal types in matrices now in use. The German writers reject the Haarlem tale, and insist on the superior pretensions of Gutenberg. Lamartine, in his recent memoir of the latter, supports the integrity of his character and the extent of his genius, while admitting that Laurence Costar was the father of the thought. He says, "the discovery of the poor sacristan would have covered the surface of the earth with plates engraved or sculptured in relief, but would not have been a substitute for a single case of moveable type. Nevertheless the principle of the art was developed in the sacristy of Haarlem, and we might hesitate whether to attribute the honour of it to Costar or Gutenberg, if its invention had not been with one the mere accidental discovery of love and chance, and with the other, the well-earned victory of patience and genius."

There have not been wanting desperate antiquaries who carry back this wonderful discovery to an infinitely more remote period. Some maintain that printing was in use during the building of Babylon, and others that the knowledge of the art came even earlier than that epoch from the Chinese. Abdalla's "*Chinese History*" notices wooden tablets engraved to print entire pages on one side of the leaf, and ages afterwards practised by Costar and other block-printers, in the Low Countries.

Where historical characters are introduced into a poem, a novel, or a play, poetical licence usually claims

the privilege of exalting or depreciating them according to the immediate object of the writer. Is this practice justifiable? It has multiplied precedent, if not law and reason, on its side. In the case now under discussion, Gutenberg's children died before him, and he has left no heir or representative to feel hurt at an imputation on his memory, or to prosecute for libel if he has been unjustly dealt with.

The play is well written, and the interest powerfully sustained; but there is something unsatisfactory in the conclusion. The same principle of dramatic licence, in the exercise of which the authors have blackened the character of Gutenberg, called upon them to punish him in proportion to the enormity of his guilt. He loses, it is true, the wife he sought to filch from his rival, but he retains the credit of his stolen invention, his consequent riches, his reputation, and his rank as master of the guild. To a worldly-minded man he has more than an equivalent for the loss of domestic happiness. As the authors have strained history in the first point, they were the more bound to do so in the second. When Euripides was blamed for bringing such a flagitious villain as Ixion on the stage, and visiting him with temporary prosperity, he replied, "but yet I brought him not off till I had fastened him to a burning wheel."

There are, moreover, some anachronisms in the "First Printer" which could not fail to be generally recognized. The biographical dictionaries tell us that Laurence Costar was born in 1370, and died in 1439. Assuming these dates to be correct, it is impossible that he could have met Gutenberg at Mentz in 1440, he himself being still young in years. Again, the famous Mentz Bible, spoken of in this play as already printed, was only commenced in 1440, and finished in 1460;

and the honours conferred on the society of printers by the Emperor Maximilian, together with their erection into a guild, did not take place until long after the death of Gutenberg, in 1468.

The part of *Laurence Costar*, maintained by Mr. C. Kean, fell quite below the mark of the leading actor of the day. But he threw his whole energies into it, and made it stand much more forward than the authors could have anticipated from the materials with which they supplied him. In the scene of the third act, with *Gutenberg*, he exhibited surprising power. The struggle between physical exhaustion and intense passion was given with startling reality. Such efforts of the actor's art furnish examples of what genius can embody from faint outline, and profitable lessons to young performers how the experience of a great master discovers effort which the scholar in his apprenticeship often passes over, or is incapable of distinguishing. A strong part may be made to tell in comparatively weak hands, but a weak one requires the strength of a giant to sustain its importance.

A play of so much merit, well acted and carefully got up, eulogised by the press and warmly applauded by the audience, might have been expected to enrich the treasury and remain long on the acting list. On the contrary, it added one more to the insolvable problems of public caprice. After nine representations it was withdrawn, simply because the receipts fell regularly below the nightly expenditure, without any prospect of reaction.

On the morning of the 6th of March, 1856, when darkness yet prevailed, the inhabitants in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden Theatre were startled from their slumbers by the announcement of that splendid edifice being on fire. In a few hours it was entirely consumed.

The discovery was made before an assembly of many thousands, who had been revelling in the saturnalia of a *bal masqué*, given by Professor Anderson, the Wizard of the North, had entirely dispersed. Fortunately, the lingering revellers were few in number, or the alarm might have occasioned a fatal rush, in which many lives would in all probability have been lost. Not long since (in February, 1859) the great Théâtre du Cirque, at St. Petersburg (devoted to Russian operas and German comedies), met destruction from fire, and also during or immediately after it had been prostituted to a similar desecration. These masquerade balls are as dangerous as they are undramatic and demoralizing. It is marvellous that the authorities do not prohibit them in public places, or that the proprietors of theatres expose their buildings to unnecessary risk by letting them for such unhallowed purposes. Covent Garden rose phoenix-like from its ashes with increased splendour, and in less than six months from the laying of the first stone the new theatre opened, on the 15th of May, 1858, with the opera of the "Huguenots." There were many speculations as to what would be built on the ground, and whether or not it would ever again be occupied by a dramatic edifice, after two conflagrations, occurring within fifty years. Superstitious observers, as they passed by, might have said or thought, as they gazed on the ruins, and the lumbered site,—

"A merry place it was in days of yore,
But something ails it now ; the place is curs'd."

But the void is filled up by Mr. Gye's magnificent building, one of the most commodious and perfect theatres in Europe, specifically erected as an Italian Opera House, and so constructed as to be equally available for any variety of dramatic entertainment. There

Miss Pyne and Mr. Harrison have, with their well selected company, recently elevated the standard national music for the encouragement of English and artists, with the success which their energy and ability so amply deserve.

During the Easter week, "Faust and Marguerite" was again brought forward, supported by two light pieces, entitled respectively, "A Prince for an Hour" and the "Victor Vanquished;" the first by Mr. J. L. Morton, the last by Mr. Charles Dance. One introduced the other concluded, the performances. Both were favourably received, and acted for more than fifty nights. The "Victor Vanquished," a comedietta in one act, rather than a farce, is an ingeniously contrived and elegant little drama, abounding in pointed and sparkling dialogue. The characters are confined to three, *Charles the Twelfth* of Sweden, the *Baron de Gortz*, his private secretary and minister, and *Ikla*, a Tartar princess, the Baron's niece. It can scarcely be called historical, for the leading incident implies that the renowned Alexander of the North once bowed to the influence of Cupid,—an assumed fact of which we have no evidence, but still permissible as a dramatic liberty even where such an acknowledged misogynist is concerned. The traditional attributes of *Charles the Twelfth* with his singular peculiarities of manner and dress are so familiarly recognized, that when he appears on the stage, we are prepared to look on a well-known animated portrait stepping from the frame. Mr. Matthews, his impersonator on this occasion, had evidently studied the Royal Swede with the care of a discriminating artist, and presented him in living identity. No particular feature was overdone; while the clear, succinct phraseology, and unique, decisive bearing were faithfully preserved.

On the 28th of April, Shakespeare's "Winter's Tale" added another to the series of great classical illustrations by which Mr. C. Kean continued with unremitting perseverance to mark the distinctive feature of his management.

When it began to be rumoured that a Greek play was in rehearsal at the Princess's, with all the usual preparation and research, many thought that Mr. Kean was about to venture on the bold experiment of going back to first principles, and intended to draw from the stores of the early fathers of the drama, Sophocles or Euripides. When it became known that the projected revival was to be Shakespearean, the "Comedy of Errors," "Troilus and Cressida," "Pericles," or "Timon of Athens," presented themselves as the probable subject of selection; but no one thought of the "Winter's Tale." No sooner was the fact announced in the bills, than there arose much difference of opinion as to the judiciousness of the choice, and the means it supplied. What can be done with the "Winter's Tale"? was asked by experienced play-goers. The plot was known to be incongruous, the play full of anachronisms, uncertain in epoch, confused in locality, irregular beyond all precedent or comparison in construction, and hitherto unattractive. These objections were pronounced insurmountable. Mr. Kean grappled them with a compelling hand, and triumphed over all. Without altering the original text, but merely by pruning and excision, he dissipated conflicting difficulties which had baffled the ingenuity, and developed innumerable beauties which had escaped the notice of his most eminent predecessors.

After the re-opening of the theatres on the extinction of the Commonwealth, and the return of Charles II., the genius of Shakespeare suffered a long eclipse, or only

glimmered faintly through the vile imitations and alterations which the corrupt taste of the day permitted to supersede the majestic originals. Downes, in his *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), mentions that during a protracted series of years, and in a list of fifty-one plays, frequently represented, only three of Shakespeare's are to be found;—so little was the great dramatist known and followed at that time. Garrick swept away many of these worthless substitutes, but he still retained some, and added a few of his own when it suited his purpose.

Shakespeare has been condemned by worshippers of the unities for making *Perdita* an infant in the third act and a woman in the fourth, passing over sixteen years with a short address from *Time* as *Chorus*, to explain the intermediate lapse. The censure is more hasty than sound. His play, thus divided, is, in fact, a *bilogy*; a story related in two distinct sections—a preliminary and a sequel,—strictly in accordance with classical rule and precedent. Garrick destroyed the connexion by omitting the first part of the action, and opening the second with a short narrative only of the events that had occurred—namely, the jealousy of *Leontes*, the assumed death of *Hermione*, and the exposure of her infant. To feel and understand Shakespeare, we must take him as he is “with all his imperfections on his head,” or reject him altogether. *Ægrescitque medendo*—by being cured he grows sick. Scenes may be cut out or curtailed, and objectionable superfluities may be expunged; but there is something so clear, comprehensive, and identical in all Shakespeare's designs, that any material alteration mars them entirely. John Kemble cast aside Garrick's condensation of the “*Winter's Tale*,” but retained his added dialogue in the last scene. Macready did the same. As actors, they thought the parts of *Hermione* and *Leontes* heightened by having more to say at the

close. Shakespeare, guided by nature, knew that, under the circumstances of their unlooked-for re-union, they would feel more than they could utter, and has given them very few words. Mr. C. Kean, by adhering to the original text, has proved himself the ablest commentator and most faithful restorer of the poet's meaning. His object is well conveyed in the passage with which he concludes the prefatory notice attached to the play-bills:—"I have endeavoured," he there says, "and I hope not altogether in vain, by the united accessories of painting, music, and architecture, in conjunction with the rapid movements and multiplied life which belong to the stage alone, to re-embody the past; trusting that the combination may be considered less an exhibition of pageantry appealing to the eye, than an illustration of history addressed to the understanding."

Our readers are as well acquainted as we are with the sources from whence Shakespeare has drawn his plot, the new characters he has created,* the exquisite poetry he has scattered through the play, and the graceful surprise with which he winds up the catastrophe. We pass from any trite dissertation on these points, which have been so often discussed, to a review of the play as produced at the Princess's Theatre. It now belongs to the past, and is not likely to be witnessed again; although Messrs. Bradbury and Evans's printed edition supplies all that reading can substitute for the animated reality.

As the curtain rose, we saw before us Syracuse at the epoch of her highest prosperity, about 330 B.C., and gazed on the fountains of Arethusa and the temple of Minerva. After the short introductory scene between *Camillo* and *Archidamus*, we passed to the banqueting-hall in the Royal palace, where *Leontes*, *Polixenes*, *Hermione*, and guests were discovered reclining on couches,

* *Antigonus*, *Paulina*, *Autolycus*, and *Clown*.

after the manner of the ancient Greeks. Musicians were playing the hymn to *Apollo*, and slaves supplied wine and garlands. Thirty-six resplendently handsome young girls, representing youths in complete warlike panoply, entered, and performed the evolutions of the far-famed Pyrrhic dance. The effect was electrical, and established at the commencement an impression of what might be expected as the play advanced. The action then proceeded, with the frenzied jealousy of *Leontes*, his commission to *Camillo* to murder *Polixenes*, and the escape of the two latter by flight.

At the commencement of the second act we were presented with a beautiful interior, representing *Hermione* in her domestic privacy, surrounded by the young Prince *Mamillius*, and her attendant ladies. They are interrupted by the violent entrance of the King, whose insane delusion has increased with the departure of *Polixenes*, and the innocent Queen is borne away to prison. In the next scene, a representation of one of the dreary "*Latomiaë*," or excavated dungeons, known as the "*Ear of Dionysius*," conveyed a corresponding idea of the severity with which the guiltless *Hermione* is treated. We then return to the palace, and find *Leontes* still torn by groundless passion, and meditating extreme vengeance. *Paulina* enters with the new-born infant, lays it at his feet, upbraids him with his tyranny, and defends her absent mistress in a torrent of indignant eloquence, until she is driven from the apartment. *Antigonus*, her husband, is sworn by the King, on a most solemn oath, involving his own life in pledge of obedience, to convey the babe to a remote, desert land, and leave it there exposed to the chances of fortune.

The third act comprised the trial of *Queen Hermione* in the public theatre at Syracuse, the usual hall of judgment on great public occasions. The arrangement of

the stage here presented an astonishing instance of scenic illusion. The area is extremely limited; yet, by pictorial and mechanical combination, it appeared to expand to the colossal proportions which we read of as belonging to the most celebrated of those ancient buildings in which thirty thousand persons might be seated on the benches.* A wonderful realization was presented by the dense assembly of auditory and officials; by the imposing appearance of the King on his throne, with sages and councillors ranged behind and on each side of him; by the arraigned Queen, borne in on her litter, with attendant females; and by the solemn procession of the Oracle. When these were grouped together, and the varying emotions of the whole assembly reflected in animated gesticulation and expression, as the incidents of the scene proceeded,—the rapt, intense attention of the entire house suspended applause for the moment; but at the close they relieved themselves by reiterated bursts of acclamation. The excitement had scarcely subsided, when, after a considerable interval, the curtain rose again for the fourth act.

In this portion of the play Mr. C. Kean substituted *Bithynia* for Bohemia. The idea originated with Sir Thomas Hanmer, in his annotations to his own edition of Shakespeare (1744). The change of locality obviates the cavil that has often been raised against the incongruity of making Bohemia a country bordering on the sea. The difference of name, as Mr. Kean observes in his preface, “in no way affects the incidents or metre of the play, while it affords an opportunity of representing the costume of the inhabitants of Asia Minor at a corresponding period, associated so intimately with

* The Theatre of Bacchus at Athens could accommodate this number. Syracuse at one time exceeded even Athens in extent and external magnificence.

Greece, professing the same form of paganism, and acquiring additional interest from close proximity to the Homeric kingdom of 'Troy.'

Antigonus lands on a desert spot on the coast, and leaves the infant *Perdita* to her fate. His vessel, with all on board, is wrecked, and he himself torn to pieces by a bear. An old shepherd and his son find the child, with the accompanying gold and jewels, and bear it off to be reared in humble obscurity. Clouds now descended and filled the stage, leading to a classical allegory, representing the course of *Time*. As these clouds dispersed, *Selene*, or *Luna*, was discovered in her car, accompanied by the *Stars* (personified by living figures), and gradually sunk into the ocean. *Time* then appeared, surmounting the globe, no longer represented by the traditionary bald-headed elder, with his scythe and hour-glass, but as a classical figure, more in accordance with the character of the play as now represented. He spoke the lines with which Shakespeare has connected the two separate epochs of his play. As *Time* descended, *Phæbus* rose with surpassing brilliancy in the chariot of the Sun, encircled by a blaze of light which filled every portion of the theatre. The group appeared to be derived from that in the centre of Flaxman's Shield of Achilles. The horses were modelled with a life and fire that would have done honour to Baron Marochetti himself. The statue-like grace and immobility of *Apollo*, as he stood in the car, reining in his impetuous steeds, impressed a universal conviction that this figure also was artificial; but the living reality was conveyed in the most startling manner, when, at the full height of his ascent, he suddenly raised his right arm to lash a restive courser. The effect baffles description. The entire allegory may be pronounced the greatest triumph of art ever exhibited on the stage.

As the allegorical pictures dissolved, we found ourselves transported to the palace of *Polixenes*, in Bithynia, and thence to a road-side landscape, where we were introduced to the merry knave *Autolycus*, in the practice of his thieving vocation, derived, as he tells us, from his father; his first victim being the unsuspecting *Clown*. An extensive pastoral scene succeeded, rich in the luxuriance of Eastern foliage, with a distant view of Nicaea, the capital of Bithynia, on the lake Ascania. Nothing could be more delightful than this complete change from the gorgeous palatial magnificence of the earlier portion of the play; and in this contrast of sylvan, as opposed to city life, with the appropriate dialogue and imagery he has placed in the mouths of his new actors, the endless variety of Shakespeare's genius is most beautifully depicted. A dance of shepherds and shepherdesses comes in so naturally, and was performed with such exquisite grace, and a musical accompaniment so completely in harmony with the scene, that we almost fancied ourselves in Arcadia during the golden age. The feeling thus produced on the mind of the spectator, is imbued with the refined sentiment gathered from the contemplation of a landscape by Gainsborough, or the Infant John of Murillo. From this delicious dream we were roused by the boisterous merriment of the *Dionysia*, or grand festival of the vintage, in honour of Bacchus, executed by an overpowering mass of satyrs, men, women, and children, in wild disguises, and with frantic energy. There must have been at least three hundred persons engaged in this revel of organized confusion, which worked up to a maddening burst at the end, when they all rushed out, presenting a perfect revivification of Comus and his Bacchanalian crew. The act terminated with the discovery of *Polixenes*, who had attended the rustic festival in disguise; his bitter denun-

ciation of the attachment of his son and heir, *Florizel*, for the supposed shepherdess *Perdita*; and the consequent flight of the young lovers to Sicily, through the agency of *Camillo*.

The fifth act is curtailed with infinite advantage, and hastens rapidly to the conclusion. The garden of *Leontes*, adapted from a drawing found at Herculaneum, exhibited the bereaved monarch, bowed down more by remorse than time, mourning the result of his madness, which has left him alone in his guilt and fruitless penitence. *Florizel*, *Perdita*, *Camillo*, and *Polixenes* arrive in succession. The King discovers his lost daughter, and the long-severed friends are reconciled. But a crowning happiness is still in store for *Leontes*, which he little deserves. *Paulina* invites him to her mansion to look on a marvellous statue of his deceased Queen. It is herself; and instead of inanimate marble, he embraces living forgiveness. This closing scene has ever formed the great charm of the play. Mr. C. Kean contrived to invest it with such imposing novelty, that although it wound up a long series of extraordinary effects, each rising above the other, it surpassed them all. The procession by torchlight, the passing round the peristyle within which the statue is placed, the grouping when *Hermione* was discovered, the expression of wonder at the first stir of her head, and the general movement as the curtain falls, are all within the ample list of his own stage improvements, and the result of the unwearied study and research he brought to bear on this captivating drama, from the beginning to the end.

The action of the "Winter's Tale" turns entirely on the sudden jealousy of *Leontes*. Shakespeare has exhibited this overwhelming passion in three opposite characters, and under very distinct aspects. With

comic extravagance in *Ford*, with progressing passion in *Othello*, and with frenzied suddenness in *Leontes*. In the latter instance he has been censured by methodical critics, who accuse him of abruptly departing from nature. The jealousy of *Leontes*, according to them, is unskilfully imagined, in being so utterly baseless, and in the little preparation with which the coming torrent is presented in such overbearing rapidity to the audience. He has no subtle poisoner, no *Iago* to pervert a mind easily excited. But before we question the workings of jealousy, let us remember what the great master says in another place of the nature of this impulse, which he has depicted with such terrible energy:—

“Jealous souls—are not ever jealous for the *cause*,
But jealous for they are jealous ; 'tis a monster,
Begot upon itself, born on itself.”

Othello is gradually wrought upon by treachery ; *Leontes* creates and feeds his own disease. When he utters to himself the first words indicating that the fever is on him—“At *my* request he would not,” with reference to the yielding of *Polixenes* to prolong his stay at the entreaty of *Hermione*, and again when he says soon after,—

“Too hot, too hot !
To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods ;”

the audience wonder, and are unable to comprehend his meaning unless prepared for it by something in his previous deportment. Mr. C. Kean, with the comprehensive genius of a great actor, leads up to this from the opening of the scene. The idea, which we never observed to have been conveyed by any preceding representative, appeared to the audience as original as it was artistically executed. By Mr. Kean's arrange-

ment of the stage, *Hermione* is seated at the foot of the couch of *Leontes*, in earnest conversation with *Polixenes*, their guest, who bends forward to address her. *Leontes* anxiously watches them, as if his mind were already disturbed by the suspicion of undue intimacy; and when they descended to the front, after the conclusion of the banquet, his manner of soliciting his friend to remain, and his demeanour in their subsequent dialogue, was at intervals cold though courteous, studied but not warm, diplomatic more than affectionate, an effort of the tongue rather than a desire of the heart. It told the story of what was to come, and the profound study with which the actor had mastered the subtle conception of his author. In the following interview with *Camillo*, when *Leontes* gives way entirely to the demon that possesses him, the expression of Mr. Kean's eye, and the rapid variation of his features, resembled the flash which precedes the thunderbolt and heralds in the approaching storm.

Throughout the second act, he sustained the torrent of passion with unabated fervour; and in the third, at the trial, calmed down to a collected sternness of manner, in tone with the solemnity of the proceedings. His agony of remorse at the end, when the sudden deaths of his wife and son are announced in quick succession, and the total change in his deportment from the stern despot to the stricken man, marked the care and intelligence with which he felt and threw out in strong variety, the multiplied shades of the character.

Shakespeare has beautifully relieved this play, by the pastoral episode which occupies the fourth act. In the fifth, we return to the court of the bereaved monarch, bereaved through his own mad intemperance. When Mr. Kean came into his garden, broken in spirit, faded

n form, and prematurely old, the contrast he presented to the manly vigour we had beheld in the earlier scenes, again demonstrated the perfect mastery of the actor over his art. His reception of *Florizel* and *Perdita* was touchingly subdued, and the instinctive affection with which he gazed on the lovely shepherdess prepared the audience for the recognition. But *Leontes* has yet another revulsion of feeling to undergo before his part is over. From hopeless sorrow and unavailing repentance he is raised to inexpressible happiness, by finding that the supposed statue of his long-mourned Queen is her living self. Here the poet has given *Leontes* little to say; but he has left him a world of meaning to convey by look and expressive gesture, more eloquent than words.

What shall we say of Mrs. C. Kean's *Hermione*—whether in appearance, costume, manner, elocution, or conception? It was exquisite throughout. The character is thoroughly feminine, and divested of resentful feelings. Even when her life is in imminent danger, she grieves more for the “crown and comfort” of that life, her lord's favour, and for the apprehension of a taint on her fair fame, than for any dread of extreme punishment. She has no angry feelings against *Leontes*, even while he is destroying her. When Shakespeare drew this and other enchanting ideals of physical and moral perfection, he must have foreseen in poetical perspective that a time would come when, instead of being impermeated by youths, as in his ruder age, they would find more congenial representatives in lovely and accomplished women.

There is not the intense passion developed in *Hermione* that characterises her more fiery husband; but there is equal variety of feeling, with superior grace, and the added charm of innocence wrongfully accused. We

cannot understand the criticism of Horace Walpole, who considers that Shakespeare intended the "Winter's Tale" as a sequel to "Henry the Eighth;" and we are still more confounded when we are told of the strong similarity between *Hermione* and *Katharine of Arragon*. Both are exposed to a trial, it is true, but under circumstances as distinct as their respective demeanour. In the case of *Katharine*, the trial is a mere judicial proceeding for a divorce; in that of *Hermione*, it is a solemn indictment for life or death. These trials establish no more relationship or comparison between the two heroines than honest *Fluellen* is able to make out between *Alexander the Great* and *Harry of Monmouth*, on much the same line of argument; namely, that there is a river in Macedon and another in Wales.

In the celebrated statue scene, which concludes the play, Mrs. C. Kean's interpretation of the poet's meaning differs entirely from that of her most eminent predecessors. A graceful or imposing attitude has been often assumed; but she adopts that which accords exactly with the language of the text. *Leontes* says:—

"Oh, thus she stood,
Even with such life of majesty,—
When first I woo'd her!"

The position directly implied maiden bashfulness, listening to a favoured suitor; and when, at the proper time, she gently raised her head, and extended her right arm, the action spoke, "Take me. I am yours," more emphatically than words could have conveyed the sentiment. The chisel of Phidias or Praxiteles never wrought an effigy in marble to surpass the motionless beauty and grace of this noble figure,—motionless and still as air, until summoned into life. Her manner of descending from the pedestal, and her silent embrace of *Leontes*,

spoke returning affection more powerfully than could have done a volume of words.

The youthful lovers, *Florizel* and *Perdita*, found charming impersonators in Miss Heath and Miss C. Belcercq, who looked, moved, and spoke as if they had been born and bred in a sylvan paradise. When Garrick revived the "*Winter's Tale*," he wrote and introduced a song for *Perdita*, which was afterwards displaced for another by Sheridan, not more suited to the character and the play than the first. Taste in Shakespeare has happily advanced far beyond the point when the conceits and prettinesses of the Della Cruscan school of verse were considered as amongst the leading attractions, in one of his most poetical and imaginative plays.

The "*Winter's Tale*" continued to run without interruption for one hundred and two nights, to the close of the season, which took place on the 22d of August. Early in July a light prelude, under the title of "*Music and Charms*," adapted from the French by Mr. D. Fisher, of the Princess's company, varied the introductory performances. On the last night, Mr. and Mrs. Kean were loudly called for, and received with reiterated acclamations. Mr. Kean then came forward alone, and spoke to the following effect :—

'LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—In obeying your kind summons, I take the opportunity of expressing my deep sense of gratitude for the constant favour with which you have received my efforts since I first entered upon management—a favour which has enabled me to present to you some of the most beautiful creations of the greatest of all poets, with a success and attraction unprecedented in the annals of the stage. Such results convert the most hazardous risk into triumphant

certainly, and convince me that I have struck the right chord in endeavouring to make the stage a correct embodiment of what is true, real, and picturesque. We have now reached the last night of our season, and the one hundred and second representation of the 'Winter Tale;' but I can scarcely say 'farewell,' as in a few days I hope once more to bid you 'welcome.' On Monday, the 1st of September, this theatre will re-open, with a revival of Sheridan's play of 'Pizarro' with the same attention to details which have accompanied our previous series of historical illustrations. In the meantime, Ladies and Gentlemen, on the part of Mrs. Kean and myself, I beg to tender you our respectful thanks and assurances of continued zeal in your service."

It has seldom happened that an actor of Mr. C. Kean's celebrity has been supported by a partner equal in ability to himself. This rare union gives them an exclusive advantage. The cry of Mr. Kean's detractors became fainter and fainter, as every succeeding season more firmly established his reputation. Still there were a few who continued pertinaciously to bark, though no longer able to bite, and whose malignity was at least equal to their impotence. A little before the season closed, one of these impartial critics was indulging, in a mixed company, in loud and general condemnation of the "Winter Tale," as produced and acted at the Princess's Theatre. On being asked if he had seen it, and closely pressed for an answer, after fencing as long as he could, he muttered a hesitating "No." This short monosyllable comprises a folio of commentary on the value of opinions which are not unfrequently delivered on equally sound foundations.

During the season which now terminated, twenty

different pieces were acted, of which four only were new. Out of two hundred and forty-nine acting nights, one hundred and sixty-seven were devoted to Shakespeare.

Before we close this chapter, the death of Madame Vestris must be noticed, which took place on the night of Friday, the 8th of August, 1856, at her residence, Grove Lodge, Fulham, after a long and painful illness, which had prevented her from appearing before the public for more than two years. Her last appearance was on the occasion of her husband's (Mr. C. Mathews) benefit, at the Lyceum, on Wednesday, July 26th, 1854, in "Sunshine through Clouds," a translation of Madame Girardin's play, "La Joie fait Peur." She was the daughter of the well-known engraver, Bartolozzi, and at the age of sixteen married M. Armand Vestris, at that time principal dancer and ballet-master at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Very soon after her marriage, in the year 1816, being an accomplished musician and linguist, she came out as *Proserpina*, in the Italian opera of "Il Ratto di Proserpina." The age of professional persons who have been long before the public is invariably exaggerated. This was particularly the case with Madame Vestris; a strange propensity in human nature, which delights in making our friends and contemporaries older than they really are, forgetting that if time gallops with them, it is not likely to amble gently with ourselves. But the weakness originates in the vanity which many give way to, of deducting a goodly decade or so from the sum total of their own register.

Not producing the effect that was expected, Madame Vestris accompanied her husband to Paris, and played for some time in tragedy and comedy in the French language, of which she was a perfect mistress. Sepa-

rating from M. Vestris, she returned to England in 1819. She engaged with Elliston, at that time manager of Drury Lane, and shortly after established her fame in a burlesque of Mozart's grand opera, called "*Giovanni in London*," in which she, as the hero, and Harley as *Leporello*, created an extraordinary sensation. From that time she continued a leading favourite in the high range of the drama, both at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, until in 1829 she became lessee of the Olympic Theatre, which she speedily transformed into one of the most fashionable temples of the dramatic art in London—a perfect theatrical boudoir.

In the year 1838, Madame Vestris, whose first husband had died in 1825, married Mr. Charles Mathews, and, leaving the Olympic under the management of Mr. Planché, they started immediately for America. The stars of the Olympic made but a slight impression on Cousin Jonathan, and returned to England in 1839, in the September of which year they entered on the lessorship of Covent Garden. Here Madame Vestris introduced the system of furnishing the drawing-rooms of modern comedy with the sumptuous elegance of the saloons of the nobility. But the plan was too expensive for the receipts, although the company comprised a host of talent, and the best writers were retained to supply a constant succession of novelty. The lessees retired with a heavy loss at the end of their third season, in April 1842. In 1847 they opened the Lyceum, where the old Olympic revels were revived, and many of the former actors and authors once more rallied under their former standard. Madame Vestris played several new parts of importance; but latterly, as her strength began to fail, she principally confined herself to the direction of the stage, and the charge of the wardrobe, in both of which departments she evinced extraordinary taste and talent.

Her name will long be remembered as one of the most attractive actresses and agreeable singers of her day. Her peculiar excellences lay in a natural ease, gracefulness, and vivacity, without apparent effort; in the elegance of her costumes; and in her scrupulous adherence to the text of the author, even in the lightest of farces or interludes.

CHAPTER IX.

SEVENTH SEASON UNDER MR. C. KEAN'S MANAGEMENT, AT THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE—REVIVAL OF SHERIDAN'S *PIZARRO*, WITH ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS—PREFATORY NOTICE—DIFFERENT OPINIONS AS TO THE LITERARY MERIT OF THE PLAY—MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN AS *ROLLA* AND *ELVIRA*—HISTORICAL MISTAKE OF KILLING *PIZARRO* IN THE ORIGINAL PLAY—GREAT SUCCESS OF THE PRESENT REVIVAL, SIXTY-EIGHT REPETITIONS—NEXT SHAKESPEAREAN PERFORMANCE—A *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*—EARLY ALTERATIONS OF THIS PLAY—GARRICK'S OPERA IN 1763—THE FAIRIES REPRESENTED BY CHILDREN—COLMAN'S ADAPTATION IN 1777—REYNOLDS'S MUSICAL VERSION AT COVENT GARDEN IN 1816—MADAM VESTRIS'S REVIVAL AT COVENT GARDEN, AND MR. PHELPS'S AT SADLER'S WELLS—BOTH EXCELLENT—MR. C. KEAN'S RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL PLAY RUNS FOR ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY NIGHTS DURING THE FIRST TWO SEASONS—THE *ROSE OF AMIENS*, A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS, AND THE PANTOMIME OF *ALADDIN*, BOTH BY MR. J. M. MORTON.

MR. C. KEAN'S seventh season commenced on Monday, September 1st, 1856, after a short recess of one week only. On this occasion, he revived Sheridan's adaptation of Kotzebue's "*Pizarro*," a play that enjoyed great reputation in its day, but had not been acted in London for many years. The subject was entirely new to the present generation. The reasons for this selection were set forth by Mr. Kean in the following preface, appended to the play-bills, and newly printed edition:—

"The success which has attended a series of historical illustrations at the Princess's Theatre, can leave no reasonable doubt that public taste approves this description of entertainment. In compliance, therefore, with an opinion so unequivocally conveyed, I have sought for a fresh chapter in the pages of the past, which may combine

with the revival of a popular play, appertaining to a deeply interesting period, much that is novel in the accompanying arrangements.

“ Heretofore, with the exception of ‘Sardanapalus,’ the subjects have been chosen from the creations of Shakespeare. In the present instance, I have selected the well-known drama of ‘Pizarro,’ for the purpose of exemplifying the customs, ceremonies, and religion of Peru at the time of the Spanish invasion.

“ The discovery of the Western hemisphere, by Christopher Columbus (the most astounding achievement in the annals of human enterprise), opened a way to the numerous successors of that illustrious pioneer, who penetrated region after region of the vast continent, eager for conquest and for gain.

“ Europe received the startling intelligence, that instead of being occupied by tribes of rude and ignorant savages, Mexico and Peru teemed with millions of humanized beings, far advanced in civilization, power, and refinement.

“ In fact, ‘Pizarro’ and his followers had found the Kingdom of the Incas inhabited by an industrious, disciplined population, united under the sway of a paternal government, possessing numerous works of art, and many national memorials. While nature appeared to revel in her grandest and most picturesque aspect, the land abounded with precious gems and metals to such an extent, that amidst the gardens of temples and palaces, trees and plants of gold and silver, most exquisitely manufactured, stood intermingled with natural productions. Birds of the same costly materials were seen upon the artificial branches, and the interior of the great Temple of the Sun, the most magnificent structure in the new world, was probably unsurpassed in the richness of its decorations by any building in the old.

“In the production of ‘Sardanapalus,’ in 1853, I availed myself of the discoveries of Layard and Botta, to place before the public a restoration of one of the earliest cities enrolled in the world’s record. On the present occasion, I venture to hope that a corresponding interest may be excited by the revival of an epoch equally wonderful, although dating little more than three hundred years antecedent to the present time.

“By the recent excavations in Assyria, entombed races were raised before the eyes of the living ; while through the adventurous and unscrupulous spirit of the Spanish conquerors of America, in the sixteenth century, vast nations, buried in obscurity, unknowing and unknown, were revealed in active existence, occupied with the pursuits of cultivated life. We read, with surprise mingled with awe, of an extensive empire, whose mysterious origin is lost in the labyrinth of ages, confined within its own limits, seeking no external intercourse ;—of a people dwelling in towns and hamlets, clustered amidst orchards and gardens, constructing canals and subterraneous aqueducts, carrying roads over plains and across mountains, forming beautiful terraces on the sides of the Cordilleras, which bloomed with every variety of vegetation ; rich in flocks, that supplied garments of the finest wool, victims for the altar, and viands for the banquet ; erecting palaces for their Incas, and temples for their God, with a profusion of wealth within the walls that almost rivalled the marvels of Arabian fable ; and what is most remarkable, enjoying the intellectual and refined amusement of a poetical drama !

“In adapting the selected play to the purposes of historical illustration, passages have been abbreviated which appeared unimportant, and several additions made to carry out the object chiefly in view. For

instance, at the close of the third act, I have introduced the principal square of the city during the grand festival of Raymi, the most magnificent and imposing of all the Peruvian religious ceremonies, which was solemnized with feasting, dancing, music, and song. On this occasion, when the Grand Luminary was worshipped as a visible god, chiefs, princes, and people, male and female, of every rank, assembled in countless multitudes, and marched in procession variously attired. Some wore the skins of animals, some appeared as angels, with wings of the condor, some in horrible masks threw themselves into postures like maniacs, while others displayed their characteristic ornaments and warlike arms. High above the joyous crowd, borne on the shoulders of his subjects and seated in his golden chair, came the monarch, prepared to pour out the consecrated wine as a libation to the deity. All advanced to greet with profound admiration the rising sun, which, having arrived at the farthest point of its meridional career, began to retrace its course to the north. Long and loud were the shouts of joy, songs of triumph, and bursts of clamorous music, when the first rays gilded the summits of the neighbouring mountain range, and the excited multitude inhaled the atmosphere impregnated with light. As we possess little information respecting 'Quito' (the place named by the dramatist),—the interior of the temple, in the second act, and the view of the city in the third, are taken from the descriptions so amply given of 'Cuzco,' the ancient capital of the empire, once the scene of so much glory and magnificence.

"The Indian airs introduced into the music are founded on melodies published in Rivero and Tschudi's work on 'Peruvian Antiquities,' as handed down to us by the Spaniards after their conquest.

“ By the revival of ‘ Pizarro,’ long known as a most attractive play, I cannot but think that a wide field is afforded for the introduction of that historical detail which lends new interest to theatrical art. The present age demands that all dramatic representations must of necessity be accompanied by a certain selection of scenery, dresses, and music. The public voice has justified me in deciding that *truth* in these matters is preferable to *inaccuracy*. Hence I conclude, that when an appropriate opportunity is embraced of blending instruction with amusement, when the mind may be informed while the eye is gratified, the drama is not likely to lose or be degraded by the attempted association.”

“ Pizarro ” was first acted at Drury Lane, on the 24th of May, 1799 ; too late in the season for the necessary run, which ended on the thirty-first night when the theatre closed. Neither duns from without, nor the bankrupt state of his exchequer, could rouse Sheridan to finish the play in time. He was unacquainted with German, and worked from previous English translations of Kotzebue, of which there were three or four,* although none had been acted. The literary pretensions of “ Pizarro ” are certainly not of a high order, and have been reduced by some writers to a contemptible standard. A story is told that, during the season when the “ Castle Spectre ” filled the exhausted treasury of Drury Lane, Sheridan and Monk Lewis (as he was called), the author, had some dispute in the green-room, when the latter offered, in confirmation of his arguments, to bet Mr. S. all the money which the “ Castle Spectre ” had brought, that he was right. “ No,” replied the manager, “ I cannot afford to bet so much as that ; but I will tell

* By Miss Plumptre, M. G. Lewis, and Heron.

you what I will do, I'll bet you all it is worth." The witticism was as rich as it was ungrateful, and might have justified a similar retort from the Monk in the case of "Pizarro." Between the two plays it would be difficult to settle the point of inferiority.

No speech was ever better calculated to entrap applause than *Rolla's* address to the soldiers, which is entirely Sheridan's, and not in the original. It was evidently intended as a taking reference to the war with the French Republic, and a philippic against the principles of the Revolution; yet nothing is said which might not with equal propriety be addressed to an army of Peruvians. Such was the popularity of this tragedy, that the King, George III., could not resist his desire to see it. He had ceased to visit Drury Lane for several years. Many causes have been assigned for his absence from that particular theatre, some sufficiently absurd; such as a personal dislike to Sheridan, because he was a Whig, a partisan of Fox, and an intimate associate of the Prince of Wales; but the most probable reason was, that he had commanded two pieces, which, on account of the complicated machinery, could not be acted on the same evening, unless the King consented to wait two or three hours between the play and the farce. The intimation of the difficulty was given in a manner not considered as consonant with court etiquette.

The juniors of the present generation who had never seen "Pizarro" until now, had often heard their fathers speak of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in *Rolla* and *Elvira*; of the glories of the Temple of the Sun, and of the peals of applause that attended the delivery of the Peruvian leader's far-famed oration to his army. There was fine acting in those days, and splendour and scenic pageantry too, after a certain

fashion; but there was little attempt at historical truth; no multitudes to fill the stage, no studied groupings, and no complicated action, in which every supernumerary engaged had a part to play, as essential to the completeness of the general picture, as the imposing attitudes and declamation of the hero or heroine. Instead of addressing an assembled nation, *Rolla* spoke to some dozen and a half of discharged veterans, who reminded the audience of the Pope's body-guard, described by Voltaire as old ladies who mount guard with umbrellas, and make war on nobody. They stood on each side of the stage, ranged in single file, with changeless aspects, and shouted feebly at the close of the general's harangue, without movement of limb or feature. *Pizarro's* tent, with which the play opened, resembled the gorgeous pavilion of a Persian satrap, and was large enough for the residence of Tippoo Saib and his harem. There lay *Elvira* on a sumptuous sofa, with a regal tiara, an embroidered robe, and an interminable train of crimson velvet, which swept the stage as she rose and moved across with measured, queen-like steps. In the German play, *Elvira* is habited as a page, in male attire, but this was a dress that Mrs. Siddons refused to wear. We remember, too, the lasting impression made on our boyish fancy by the miraculous transit of a ball of lighted tow, which descended upon the altar, in the temple scene, by means of an invisible wire; and how *Rolla*, to bribe the sentinel, produced from under his cloak a modern red-morocco jewel-case, similar to that which ladies lay upon their dressing-tables. There were many other monstrous incongruities, but they passed without notice, for the age had not then been impressed with the conviction that "truth in such matters of detail was preferable to inaccuracy."

The most objectionable point in the original arrangement of the play, was the ill-contrived and almost ludicrous manner in which retributive justice was dealt on *Pizarro*, who, after being bullied through five acts by *Alonzo*, *Elvira*, and *Rolla*, in succession, was killed unfairly in the end; as Porson commemorates in his amusing parody:—

“ Four acts are tol, lol ; but the fifth's my delight,
Where history's trac'd with the pen of a Varro ;
And Elvira in black and Alonzo in white
Put an end to the piece by killing *Pizarro*.”

It is but just to the memory of Kotzebue to remark that this departure from historical fact was a gratuitous interpolation by Sheridan, a compliance with what was then the prevailing taste of the play-going public, dragged in to excite the plaudits of the gallery, and to foreshadow the fate of the invader with whom England was menaced. Every schoolboy might have known and remembered that Pizarro lived to conquer Peru, and was finally assassinated in his viceregal palace at Lima, by the son and friend of his early associate, Almagro, whom he had executed some years before. The omission of this fictitious episode in Mr. Kean's new arrangement, removed what had always been considered an impediment and error, by continuing the action after the death of *Rolla*. It was a skilful exercise of the *callida junctura* which denoted clear critical perception, and sound managerial judgment.

A comparison between Mr. C. Kean's printed version, and the earlier one of Sheridan, will show at once the value and amount of the alterations and introductions. The most important of the latter were the military chorus, and march of the Spanish troops at the

end of the first act, and the grand Peruvian festival of Raymi, which concluded the third. The gradual approach of the rising sun, with the effect of the expanding beams in this scene, and the earlier one of the sacrifice in the temple, was gorgeous, imposing, and novel beyond all precedent. The return of the Peruvian army in triumph from the battle, with the accompanying gratulations of their wives and children, called up reminiscences of the recent national demonstration, when the surviving heroes of the Guards, on their return from the Crimea, marched through the streets of London. The management of *Rolla's* escape with *Cora's* child, was another point that utterly bewildered the audience. Instead of the old-fashioned mode of cutting down a rustic bridge, that looked as if arranged for the purpose, he swung himself by the pendent branch of a tree across a tremendous chasm, and being mortally struck by the musketry of the Spanish soldiers, in the passage, was seen staggering through the rocks and glades until he disappeared in the distance, the effect of perspective being carried out by a duplicate figure of smaller size, which gave rise to endless conjectures and arguments as to how this optical delusion could be contrived.

Mrs. C. Kean could never have seen Mrs. Siddons in *Elvira*, or she might have involuntarily moulded her conception upon that of such an illustrious predecessor. This fortunately was impossible, and has given us an original portraiture, instead of an imposing copy. Mrs. Siddons looked and moved the tragedy queen, with an innate air of regality she could never entirely forget. She was stately, grand, impressive, tremendous; but she lacked flexibility, and it was difficult to associate with her the idea that she was a

being who could be led by ardent feeling into a position of subserviency to a spirit inferior to her own. Mrs. C. Kean was more like a warm-hearted, impulsive woman, governed by excited imagination, more full of feminine sympathy, and, if we may be permitted to carry out the antithetical comparison, less fearful, but more agreeable. In her hands the character became softened without being rendered weak. She represented *Elvira* as goaded and perverted by *insult* rather than by *injury*. The distinction is as true to nature, as it is clearly conveyed. "I have suffered at the hands of *Pizarro*," she says to *Rolla*, "as deeply as scorn and *insult* can infuse their deadly wounds." Her demeanour and conduct bear out what Junius has so truthfully laid down as an axiom in the complications of the human heart:—"Injuries may be atoned for and forgiven, but insults admit of no compensation; they degrade the mind in its own esteem, and force it to recover its level by revenge."

Rolla is a more amiable stage creation. He may be unnaturally perfect, but he is infinitely interesting. He moves through the play the cynosure of universal admiration. Every eye looks on him with delight, and every ear greedily catches his accents. How angry we feel with *Cora* for her preference of the comparatively tame *Alonzo*. Mr. C. Kean appeared to great advantage in this noble impersonation, than which nothing could be more opposite to his *Wolsey*, *Hamlet*, or *Louis the Eleventh*. He, too, like his accomplished partner, must have studied exclusively from his own ideas. John Kemble died long before he became an actor, and Young, the legitimate successor of the first *Rolla*, retired while Charles Kean was yet in his early novitiate. *Rolla* was never amongst his father's acknowledged characters, and, on the few occasions when he performed it in

London, the play was either slurred over, or cooked p in a hurry for a benefit.

Pizarro is one of those thankless tyrants who require an imposing appearance, with a dauntless, determined bearing; a type of selfish ambition, as opposed to disinterested patriotism. A more faithful reflection of this stern warrior could not have been given than by Mr. Ryder. Cooper was impressive in *Orozembo*; and Miss Heath displayed much tenderness in *Cora*. The scenery reflected the highest credit on Mr. Grieve and his assistants. The glowing luxuriance and warmth of South American vegetation were transferred to the canvas with the delicate finish of the richest cabinet painting.

On the 15th of October, 1856, before the attraction of "Pizarro" had begun to wane, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," was produced. This beautiful emanation of Shakespeare's fancy may be considered, perhaps, the most exquisite specimen of graceful, imaginative, and harmonious composition that the mind of a great poet has ever conceived, or his pen transmitted to posterity. The prying investigation of commentators has tortured itself in vain attempts to discover any direct source or popular story from whence Shakespeare derived or constructed his drama. All that they have been able to burrow out amounts to the coincidence of a few names which have been met with before, and a very slight similarity between his fairies and those introduced in Michael Drayton's fantastical poem of "Nymphid." These frivolous disparagements have been hypercritically set forward to detract from the original conception of the most universal and discursive genius ever enclosed within a human form; a genius which, with the swiftness of thought, could traverse and surpass the boundaries of the universe, control space and time, and in the words of his own *Puck*, "put a girdle round about the

earth in forty minutes." When Shakespeare wrote for the emergencies of the theatre, he borrowed his subjects from familiar tales, legends, or chronicles; when he composed from pure inspiration and poetic impulse, he drew upon his own exhaustless invention.

Garriek, when he revived "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at Drury Lane, in 1763, omitted many of the most poetical passages, which are so profusely scattered through the play that they supply more standard quotations than almost any other single production of the same author. The manager also supposed that as fairies are generally associated with the idea of tiny, diminutive elves, it would be a happy thought to have *Oberon*, *Titania*, and their attendant courts and familiars, represented by small children. The conception was a mistake, and the experiment a failure. The piece, thus metamorphosed, was acted only once, to a thin November audience who were cold and drowsy. Respect for Shakespeare kept them silent, but that silence also induced them to follow the example of the four lovers, who in one scene are all discovered lying fast asleep on the stage. Shakespeare has endowed the fairy monarch and his queen with the language, feelings, sentiments, passions, and jealousies of matured humanity. They speak, think, and act like real men and women, reminding us of Cupid, no longer the mythological infant, but the lover and husband of Psyche. None of the attributes given to them could be adequately conveyed through the puerile organs of childhood. Consistency might to a certain extent be imparted to the eye, but it was lost to the intelligence. Shakespeare's fairies delight in the moonlight revel on the noiseless grass; they are shadowy, herial, bright, elastic essences, gifted with supernatural power and refinement, continually mixing themselves up with the affairs of mortals; but we cannot figure them

to our minds as bearing any resemblance to the lilliputian, household imps, so inseparably connected with our nursery fables and recollections.

It has been said, too, that the play is deficient in dramatic interest; that the lovers are tame, and that *Theseus* and *Hippolyta* do nothing. Assuredly it is not intended to embody a history of deep, concentrated passion. There is no design of harrowing up the soul and of conveying the fearful lessons which are taught by "Othello," "Macbeth," or "Lear." To look for violent, conflicting action, and collision of opposite character, where the scene passes the boundaries of common nature, and the chief actors are etherialized beings flitting through boundless space, is to expect them where they can never be found, except in the incongruous tales of eastern enchantment. The interest and incidents of Shakespeare's play amply suffice for the purpose in view, and he has combined them with the hand of a great master, and with skilful variety to produce what he designed,—a fairy drama, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. If the mortals introduced had been rendered more prominent than the mythological agents, the entire construction and object of the play would have been subverted. Shakespeare knew better than his critics when, where, and how to bring his resources together and to balance them so as to preserve that just harmony of proportion, which marks one of the most delicate distinctions between ordinary ability and exalted genius.

Very few of Shakespeare's immortalities have been so unmercifully subjected to the transmuting process of the crucible as the "*Midsummer Night's Dream*." As far back as the return of Charles II. (in 1661), a comic actor named Cox, celebrated for a peculiar class of drolls and farces, added this magnificent conception to the list of his mummeries, or rather a part of it, unde-

the title of the "Humours of Bottom the Weaver." About thirty years later (1692) it became an opera, and was called the "Fairy Queen." In 1716, a drunken ass singer, Leveridge by name, changed it into a masque, entitled, "Pyramus and Thisbe," from which became a mock opera in 1745, the music being supplied by a composer named Lampe. Ten years later, Garrick produced it as "The Fairies," with Italian singers. Colman repeated a similar experiment in 1777; and, in 1816, it was presented as a musical play at Covent Garden, with alterations and additions by Frederic Reynolds. The interpolations of the last-named writer wound up with a grand pageant, commemorative of the triumphs of *Theseus*; which same triumphs have no more connexion with the incidents and progress of the original drama, than a panorama of the battle of Waterloo. *Theseus* himself is only a subordinate pivot, indicated point to connect the story. During Madame Vestris's management at Covent Garden, the true Shakespearean version was restored, proving one of her most attractive cards. Mr. Phelps also included it in his list at Sadler's Wells. The two latter restorations deserve to be mentioned in terms of the highest praise; they were steps in the right direction, although the claim of superiority must be assigned to the still more recent revival by Mr. Kean, of which we are now speaking.

In the "Midsummer Night's Dream," which is almost exclusively a creation of fancy, there is scarcely any scope for that illustrative and historical accuracy, or for that classical research, so peculiarly identified with Mr. Kean's system of management, and with which his name had now become almost synonymous: nevertheless, he availed himself of the few opportunities afforded by the subject, of carrying out his favourite

plan. So little is known of Greek manners and architecture in the time of Theseus, twelve hundred years before the Christian era, and so probable is it that the buildings were of the rudest form, that any attempt to represent them on the stage would have failed in the intended object of profitable instruction. Holding himself, for these reasons, "unfettered with regard to chronology," Mr. Kean presented ancient Athens to us in the opening scene, at the culminating period of its magnificence, "as it would have appeared to one of its own inhabitants at a time when it had attained its greatest splendour in literature and art." His scholastic taste took advantage of the specified scene of action, to place before the eyes of the spectators, on the rising of the curtain, a restored view of that famous city, "standing in its pride and glory," which excited the spontaneous sympathy, and called up some of the earliest and deepest impressions of every educated mind. We saw, on the hill of the Acropolis, the far-famed Parthenon, the Erechtheum, and the statue of the tutelary goddess Minerva, or Athena; by its side the theatre of Bacchus; in advance, the temple of Jupiter Olympian partially hiding the hall of the Museum; and on the right, the temple of Theseus. The view also included the summit of that memorable eminence, "from whence the words of sacred truth were first promulgated to the Athenian citizens by apostolic inspiration."

Nothing could exceed the consistent harmony with which all the varied elements of the play were blended together. The introduction to the haunt of the supernatural beings; the first appearance of *Oberon* and *Titania*, with their attendant trains; the noiseless footsteps of the dance on the moonlit greensward, with the shadowed reflection of every rapid and graceful movement; the wood peopled with its innumerable fairies

legions, whose voices lull their queen to sleep upon a bank of flowers; the melodious music composed by Mendelssohn to the words of the author, in a strain and tone of feeling in intimate sympathy with the subject; the perpetual change of scene and incident; the shifting diorama; the beams of the rising sun glittering on the leaves; the gradual dispersion of the mist, discovering the fairy guardians, light and brilliant as gossamer, grouped around the unconsciously sleeping mortals; the dazzling magnificence of the palace of Theseus at the close, thronged on every staircase, balustrade and corridor, with myriads of aerial beings, who join in an unseen and unheard epithalamium on the mortal inmates who have retired to rest;—these, in an endless succession of skilfully-blended, pictorial, mechanical, and musical effects, overpowered the faculties of the spectators with the influence of an enchanting vision. Written description can convey but a faint idea of the glowing, animated reality. The monotonous feelings of every-day life were forgotten, and we woke after a three hours' journey into another world, as if from the recollection of a delicious dream. What more convincing evidence could be given of the potency of the spell than a mention of the fact that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was repeated for one hundred and fifty nights during this and the following season.

The actors ought not to be forgotten. The play contains no character suited to the abilities of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean. *Theseus* of Athens, and *Hippolyta*, his Amazonian queen, take the lead amongst the human personages. *Hippolyta* says little, while *Theseus* has only to look heroic, and speak some fine passages of poetry, never omitted in selections from the "beauties of Shakespeare." Both were splendidly impersonated by Miss Murray and Mr. Ryder. Miss Heath and Miss Bufton, as *Helena*,

and *Hermia*, were beautiful to gaze upon. Miss Fanny Ternan made a highly successful first appearance as *Oberon*, and Miss Carlotta Leclercq acquitted herself with bewitching grace as *Titania*, the Fairy Queen. The progress of this young lady may be quoted as a remarkable evidence of the excellent training of the Princess's Theatre. In six years, from a member of the corps de ballet, she became one of the most accomplished and versatile comic actresses of the present day. Another presented itself in the precocious talent of Miss Ellen Terry, a child of eight years of age, who played the merry goblin, *Puck*, a part that requires an old head on young shoulders, with restless elfish animation, and an evident enjoyment of her own mischievous pranks. For *Bottom* and his brother operatives the "hard-handed" men of Athens, who gratify their own vanity and amuse their superiors with the tragic mirth of "Pyramus and Thisbe," we had Harley, F. Matthews, Meadows, Saker, and F. Cooke. These rich comedians carried off the underplot and relief of the play with exquisite fooling. Harley in particular presented a variety in the line of originals in which that worthy scion of the old school had long been without a rival. His acting was, in fact, a school of itself which baffled imitation and died with its master.

On Tuesday, the 18th of November, an amusing and well-constructed after-piece, in two acts, was produced, entitled "Our Wife; or the Rose of Amiens;" in this we recognized an adaptation (by Mr. J. M. Morton) from a French operatic play, acted in Paris some sixteen years ago, at the Opera Comique, called "*La Rose de Peronne*," but not until now transplanted to the London stage. The experienced English dramatist condensed his materials with good taste and skill. Our volatile neighbours, in the intricacies and ingenuities

of plot, and the combination of unexpected effects, possess a certain superiority of constructive art which we readily imitate and acknowledge, but seldom equal. Yet mixed up with their best plays there is usually some leading objection on the score of morality, something that offends English propriety and delicacy; a series of calamities arising from the eccentric indulgence of unsanctioned passion. Writers of this persuasion appear to think that an audience cannot be excited except by strong pictures of depravity and representations of "three piled" vice, which, for the honour of human nature, we hope and believe to be the exceptions rather than the rule. Hence the outcry which always accompanies the production of a drama of this class, although sometimes without diminishing its attraction. For a nation that professes decorum, and winces at immorality, we should be a little more consistent. The moral poison of the *Dame aux Camelias* was refused a licence when presented in sturdy out-spoken English; but when by alchemic process it became transmuted into Italian melody, it was permitted to diffuse itself without let or limit. In the "Rose of Amiens" there was no taint of this besetting sin. All was light, humorous, entertaining, exciting, and interesting, without a line in the dialogue or an inference in the plot and action, that could offend even an audience of puritans. This pleasant little comedy commanded thirty-three repetitions, and was only laid aside for the pantomime, founded this year on the old Arabian Nights' tale of "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp."

CHAPTER X.

REVIVAL OF KING RICHARD THE SECOND BY MR. C. KEAN—PREVIOUS ALTERATIONS OF THIS PLAY, BY TATE, THEOBALD, AND WROUGHTON—INVARIABLE WANT OF ATTRACTION—ATTRIBUTED TO THE ESSENTIALLY UNDRAMATIC NATURE OF THE SUBJECT—EDMUND KEAN IN RICHARD THE SECOND, AT DRURY LANE, IN 1815—MACREADY, IN THE SAME PART, AT THE HAYMARKET, IN 1851—SUMMARY OF THE PLAY, AND NEW EFFECTS, AS PRODUCED BY MR. C. KEAN—HIS ACTING AS THE KING—MRS. C. KEAN AS THE QUEEN—THE PLAY RUNS FOR EIGHTY-FIVE NIGHTS WITHOUT INTERMISSION—GENERAL REMARKS—REVIVAL OF THE TEMPEST—CLOSE OF THE SEASON—TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-TWO SHAKESPEAREAN REPRESENTATIONS.

JOHN, Duke of Marlborough, a man of action rather than a reader, and of very limited education, was often heard to say that he derived his chief knowledge of history from witnessing the representations of Shakespeare's plays. Yet in his day he could only have seen the great magician imperfectly reflected in the mutilations of Gildon, Dennis, Nahum Tate, Colley Cibber and Co., with the "Macbeth" and "Tempest" of Dryden and Davenant; in all of which the name of the author was preserved, while the strength and beauty of his poetry were nearly suffocated. Had the great duke lived in the present age, and witnessed Mr. C. Kean's genuine revivals at the Princess's Theatre, his notions of Shakespeare and English chronicled history would have been much nearer the truth; and he would have hailed a revolution in literary and dramatic taste as extraordinary, as the political changes to which he so largely contributed.

“ Richard the Second,” from the true text of Shakespeare, was produced at the Princess’s on the 12th of March, 1857. Mr. Kean, in a clear and ably written preface to the published book, while detailing his list of authorities, and thanking the zealous antiquaries who had seconded his own researches, reiterated what he had declared before ; namely, that his leading object in the Shakespearean revivals was to preserve the language of the author inviolate ; to embellish his magnificent conceptions with all the accessorial aid of pictorial and mechanical appliances ; to resuscitate history whenever the opportunity presented itself, even to the most minute details, so that every scene should be a text to lecture on ; and to base all that he presented to the spectator on unimpeachable authorities. It need not be asked, how is it possible that the dramatic art, with its multiplied resources and extended influence could be more nobly employed, or how could the memory of the greatest poet that ever breathed, be more honoured and exalted ? There can be but one answer, except from the narrow *nil admirari* critics, who find all barren “ from Dan to Beersheba ;” who walk the world perpetually writhing and sneering, disappointed and bilious, vexed at the success of their neighbours, and who never knew the luxury of an honest burst of exultation, or joined in a heart-springing round of applause. And fortunate it is for the drama, that these jaundiced cailers are in a powerless minority.

Steevens, the celebrated Shakespearean commentator and editor, says, in a note appended to the “ Yorkshire Tragedy ” (one of the seven spurious plays), and in his edition of 1793,—“ The critics may applaud “ Richard the Second,” though the successive audiences of more than a century have respectively slumbered over it as often as it has appeared on the stage. Garrick had

once resolved on its revival, but his good taste at last overpowered his ambition to raise it to the dignity of the acting list." If Garrick had laid his fingers on this play, we should have had as many un-Shakespearean additions and alterations in the text, as he had been guilty of in "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," the "Winter's Tale," and the "Midsummer Night's Dream." On this point he was possessed with a *caco-dæmon*, and fancied it the spirit of the Bard of Avon. Nahum Tate, in 1681, metamorphosed "Richard the Second" into a thing called the "Sicilian Usurper," changing the time, place, and incidents, as well as the language. This farago was stopped on the second night by the authorities, not for its demerits or desecration of Shakespeare, but because they thought it dangerous to allow the public to witness successful rebellion. Theobald (the dethroned hero of Pope's "Dunciad") in 1719 produced another monstrous travesty at Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, which ran for seven nights, and obtained for the mutilator a purse of one hundred guineas from Lord Orrery for a fulsome dedication. In 1738, a third version was tried at Covent Garden, chiefly remarkable for the performance of "tall Johnson," as he was called, the son-in-law of Aaron Hill, who was selected for *John of Gaunt*, because he was bony and burly, and his stature approached seven feet. Then the play slumbered for seventy-seven years, until, in 1815, the Drury Lane Committee employed their stage-manager, Wroughton, to hash it up for Edmund Kean; the said Wroughton being a heavy actor, and a heavier scholar, with as little of the Shakespearean inspiration as could be expected from leaden mediocrity. Strangely fantastic were the tricks which this play-wright was allowed to play with his subject. The touching and naturally-flowing rhymes, so characteristic of the early compositions of the author,

and so peculiar to the age in which he wrote, were laboriously and pedantically altered to halting blank verse; scenes were interpolated bodily from the *disjecta membra* of several other plays; new speeches were written, in justification of which, Colley Cibber on "Richard the Third" was pleaded as a precedent, but without his happy ingenuity; *Bolingbroke* delivered a panegyric on thriving ambition, from *Aaron the Moor*, in "Titus Andronicus;" and the *Queen*, who had been despatched by Shakespeare to France, in accordance with historical fact, was made to rush in frantically to the dungeon at Pontefract, and expire on the body of her murdered husband.

All this (shall we not call it sacrilege?) and more, was sanctioned in full council by a committee of erudite lords and members of the lower house, who then held the sceptre of Drury Lane *in commendam*; all this Shakespearicide received the fiat of the public, to a certain extent, and was perpetrated, moreover, at the precise period which after-dinner orators at charitable festivals, and before the plate goes round, delight in glorifying and bewailing as "the palmy days of the drama." Edmund Kean did wonders with the part of the deposed king. Many are still living who remember how that bright genius struggled to emancipate Shakespeare from the heavy dross with which he was clogged; what startling effects he produced, particularly in the third act; but how, at the same time, no permanent attraction could be elicited from such an ill-assorted mixture. In the arrangement there was little thought bestowed on the author, and none on the truthfulness of history. Not even the powers of a Kean could restore permanent life to a play in which the vital principle had been so cruelly reduced. After ten or twelve repetitions it ceased to be inquired after.

Time rolled on, and in 1851 Mr. Macready appeared twice as *Richard the Second*, at the Haymarket, a few weeks only before he retired from professional life. It was scarcely worth his while to venture a new part on the eve of abdication. The play was then acted from the text of Shakespeare, but not, in stage phraseology, "got up," and its immediate withdrawal indicated a very qualified approbation. The tone of criticism in some of the most favourably-disposed journals, implied directly that the want of success was owing to its being essentially undramatic, although, in some respects, a fine poem;—a singular dictum, when we call to mind that Shakespeare wrote exclusively for the stage, without thinking of the study or the lecture room.

We have here enumerated all that the London public have ever seen of "*Richard the Second*," on the boards,* within the memory of the living generation. Thus, as it will appear, the subject came fresh and vigorous into the hands of Mr. Charles Kean.

"*Richard the Second*," as represented at the Princess's Theatre in 1857, opens in the Privy Council Chamber at Westminster, with the quarrel of *Bolingbroke* and *Norfolk*, in the royal presence, and the *King's* appointment that they shall decide the question by single combat. After a short dialogue between the widowed *Duchess of Gloucester*, who suspects *Norfolk* of having contrived the murder of her husband, and *John of Gaunt*, in the Savoy Palace, close to the Strand, the scene shifts to the lists at Gosford Green, near Coventry; and here we are presented with a passage of arms according to the usages of ancient chivalry. The antagonists are mounted, their spears in rest, the trumpets sound the charge, and they are rushing to engage with

* There was an alteration by a certain W. Goodall, resident in the classic regions of Manchester, printed in 1772, but never acted.

the impetuosity of mutual hatred, when the *King* throws down his warder, suspends the duel, and banishes the challenger and challenged. Had the fight proceeded, and *Mowbray* by good fortune killed his haughty appellant, *Richard* might never have lost the crown, the tragedy at Pontefract would not have darkened our annals, and the subsequent history of England would have detailed a different series of events.

The dying chamber of old "time-honoured Lancaster," in Ely House, Holborn, commences the second act; the bed, the paintings on the walls, the furniture, and all the appointments of the room, being scrupulously copied from authorities beyond dispute. We hear the indignant reproaches of *Gaunt*, and his unheeded advice to the thoughtless monarch, with the angry replies of the latter, followed by the arbitrary appropriation of his uncle's vast possessions, as soon as he has ceased to breathe. The *King* then departs for the Irish wars. Up to this point of the play, the character of *Richard* is merely introductory, affording no scope to the actor and exciting no interest with the audience. He has proved himself an unjust steward, and prepares the way for his own subsequent calamities.

The *Queen* is now introduced, at the entrance to St. Stephen's Chapel. Shakespeare, for the sake of heightening the interest of his play, has deviated from historical truth, by representing Isabella of Valois as a woman; when espoused by *Richard*, she was a child, not nine years old. There is no evidence to show that she ever saw him after his departure for Ireland. She had scarcely reached ten when he was slain. Henry the Fourth, after some time, allowed her to return to France, when she married the Duke of Orleans, and died in her twenty-second year, September 13th, 1410.

As the *Queen* leaves the stage with the *Duke of York*

who presents, without questioning his suspicious loyalty, a most incompetent viceroy in troublous times, we pass to a most beautifully painted landscape in Gloucestershire, through the forest glades of which the army of *Bolingbroke* advances, in the full panoply of war, confident in their leader, and glowing with the pride of anticipated success. In the march of that formidable and unopposed host through the heart of the country, casting their ominous shadows before, we read the approaching downfall of the absent king.

As the curtain rises for the third act, *Richard* lands from Ireland at Milford Haven; but has scarcely time to express his joy at once more treading the soil of his own kingdom, when he feels the sceptre gliding from his hands. At every moment he receives tidings of the rapid approach of his rival, and the desertion of his friends. Now the dramatic pith of the character begins to unfold itself. The abyss is yawning beneath his feet, and the sudden discovery prostrates his manhood. The accumulation of misery wrings his soul with agonizing grief. He has no philosophy, but he can feel and suffer acutely the impending degradation. He is a man, though a weak and erring one, and we forget his faults in his misfortunes. Shakespeare has made his poetical *Richard* utter precisely what we can conceive the real Richard to have given vent to, in that situation; and most impressively were the speeches rendered, and the conflicting emotions conveyed, in tone, gesture, and expression, by his living representative. We recollect nothing finer than Mr. Kean's acting throughout this entire scene, except perhaps his climax in the next, when he comes forth from Flint Castle, and surrenders to *Bolingbroke*. The latter kneels and tenders obeisance in mock humility. *Richard* struggling with his indignation, replies,—

“Fair cousin, you debase your princely knee,
 To make the base earth proud with kissing it :
 Me rather had my heart might feel your love,
 Than my unpleas'd eye see your courtesy.
 Up, cousin, up ; your heart is up, I know,
 Thus high at least, (*touching his own head*)
 although your knee be low.”

The burst of natural passion with which Mr. C. Kean worked up this speech, and the effect he produced upon the audience, almost persuaded those who remembered his father in the same passage, that they saw him standing bodily before them, in the person, and reflected in the mind of his son.

Bolingbroke, now virtually king, proceeds to the metropolis, accompanied, or rather attended by the captive *Richard*. All readers of Shakespeare, from their school-boy days, are familiar with the often-quoted description of the entry of the two cousins into London, so pathetically described by their uncle *York* to his *Duchess*, in the latter portion of the play. This was declared by *W. G. Ryden*, a jealous critic, to be a sublime passage of dramatic poetry superior to anything in *Sophocles* or *Euripides*, and which left the moderns, without exception, at an immeasurable distance. Mr. C. Kean here seized the boldest idea, and transferred to the scene the most graphic Shakespearean illustration that ever entered into the mind of actor or manager : an illustration that gave reality to the play it was never supposed to possess. He embodied and anticipated the description of *York*, in an episode of action, introduced between the third and fourth acts, carrying on the story, connecting the chain of events, and preparing the spectators for the solemn abdication of *Richard* which immediately follows. The contrast of feeling and position between the falling and the rising monarch is thus brought out in masterly relief. This episode was pronounced by thousands who wit-

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nessed it on repeated occasions, to be, beyond all comparison, the most marvellous scenic illusion that has ever been attempted. If a citizen of London, at 139 could have been actually revived, and seated within the stalls of the theatre without passing through the change of the external world, he would have fancied that he saw a living repetition of what he once had taken a part in. There could not have been less than from five to six hundred persons on those contracted boards, all moving with trained regularity or organized disorder, according to the varying incidents. The music, the joy-bells, the dance on the crowded balconies and windows, the throngs in the streets, the civic processions, the mailed warriors, the haughty *Bolingbroke*, the heart-broken *Richard*, the maddening shouts of gratulation which attend the one, while the other is received with silence, gradually deepening into murmurs, groans, and insults, the scrupulous accuracy with which every dress and movement is portrayed;—all this completed a picture which brought back the past to the eyes of the present, and bewildered the spectators with a mingled sensation of astonishment and admiration. The scene altogether surpassed the glories of *Wolsey's* banquet and ball in “Henry the Eighth,” or the maddening reality of the Dionysian pastime in the “Winter’s Tale.” The spell was rendered still more potent by the knowledge that we were passing before us the resuscitation of a memorable passage from our own domestic chronicles.

The pomp and bustle of the episode in the streets of London, prepare the audience for the touching solemnity of *Richard's* abdication in Westminster Hall; which, with a short preceding scene of the *Queen* with the *Gardener* at Langley, the *Duke of York's* country residence, occupies the fourth act. Here again the acting of Mr. C. Kean had its full play, riveting

the attention of the audience, and dividing their expressions of satisfaction between tears and applause. The effect produced in this part of the tragedy, which depends entirely on the actor, proved beyond denial, how the poetry can retain its full value distinct from the surrounding pageantry, and how its power is increased rather than obscured or weakened by accessorial relief.

The fifth act opens before the Traitor's Gate at the Tower, with a pathetic farewell between *Richard* and his *Queen*. This scene affords Mrs. C. Kean the only opportunity a very insignificant part allows of showing that such talent as hers can create material out of almost nothing, and that the impression which a finished artist can produce, is not dependent on the amount of words she has to utter. The features, the mind, and the heart, are potent movers, even when the tongue has little to express.

The play now rapidly hastens to a conclusion. In the gloomy dungeon at Pontefract the crime is perpetrated; the body of the murdered *Richard* is laid before *Bolingbroke*, in St. George's Hall, Windsor, while he sits in state, as King, attended by the nobles of the land, surrounded on the steps of the throne by his four sons, in the plenitude of his power and triumph. In that proud hour, when all his worldly hopes are realized, remorse touches his soul, the moral is consummated, the history is complete, and the curtain falls.

All the dry reading of the closet, the old black-letter tomes of Holinshed and Hall, the multiplied volumes of Rapin, Tindal and Hume, would fail to impress the mind with such a truthful and lasting impression of any given passage in our English annals, as that conveyed by a single play of Shakespeare, as placed upon the stage of the Princess's Theatre during Mr. C. Kean's

management. Never was a great problem more completely solved by the result.

Old play-goers often remark, and old actors complain, that modern audiences are less enthusiastic in the outward and visible tokens of their delight; less given to applaud than were their fathers and grandfathers. The fact is apparent. Hence it is inferred (somewhat hastily) that acting has degenerated, and dramatic taste become less fervid. We suspect the converse of both conclusions to be nearer the truth. Education, refinement, and general knowledge, have rendered all classes more exacting. It is not so easy to astonish as it was formerly. Thirty or forty years ago, the great idol of the day made insulated points, at which the pit stood up, and the house vociferously cheered. It was the actor they went to see, rather than the play; and when he was not on the stage they yawned, for there was little then of collateral aid to excite sustained attention. At least half the entertainment operated as a soporific; there was no succession of pictures, no resuscitation of actual manners and persons as they existed in bygone times; no accuracy of detail in unimportant as well as in the more prominent scenes; and no effort to present a consistent whole, instead of a dazzling portion. Marlowe what Shakespeare himself says in this identical play of "Richard the Second":—

"As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage,
Are idly bent on him that enters next,
Thinking his prattle to be tedious."

This shows distinctly that in his early day (and the application holds good to a much more recent period) the spectators thought little of the drama itself, and had no perception of the power with which pictorial and mechanical art could be called in to relieve, vary

and enhance the effect of impressive acting. We know no instance in which the fact has been so thoroughly established as in Mr. C. Kean's performance in the third and fourth acts of "Richard the Second," in which the dramatic essence of the character is concentrated. The most exceptionous critics have admitted that in this aduious delineation there was no mannerism, no imitation of any style, no exaggeration, nothing artificial or laboured; the veritable *Richard* stood, moved, and spoke before us, with all his wounded pride, his mortified sensibility, his wrongs, his woes, and his early expiated follies;—as transferred from the pages of the historian, warmed and coloured by the imagination of the poet, and called into re-animated existence by the kindred genius of his interpreter.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were ably seconded by Mr. Ryder, who both looked and acted well as "the mounting *Bolingbroke*." Mr. Cooper and Mr. Walter Lacy deserve similar commendation as the *Dukes of York and Lancaster*.

On the evening of the 13th of May, 1857, during the performance of "Richard the Second," an accident occurred, which threatened the destruction of the theatre, with the loss of many lives. Providentially, the impending calamity was averted. As the velvet curtains, instead of the usual drop scene, were withdrawn for the fifth act, they suddenly caught fire from the gas-lights at the side. The material being of the most combustible nature, ignited with incredible rapidity. The conflagration spread over the borders above, and in an moment the whole of the proscenium was in flames. The audience began to rise, and if a sudden rush to the doors had taken place, as has sometimes occurred upon a similar alarm, it is fearful to reflect on what might have occurred. Mrs. C. Kean, who was discovered on the stage in her place to commence the act, came instantly

forward with the most perfect self-possession, assure the audience that there was nothing to apprehend, that the fire was only momentary, and would be subdued at once, entreating them to sit still. Her presence of mind communicated itself to those she addressed, and they remained in their places. An ample supply of water and other resources were in readiness, with active hands that knew how to employ them. Some daring carpenters, at the hazard of life and limb, detached the flaming border from the mass above, and in a few moments the stage was in a deluge, strewn with the wrecks of scenery that had been destroyed. Mr. C. Kean then announced the impossibility of concluding the play, and requested the indulgence of the audience for the inevitable omission. They dispersed quietly, and as we may suppose, deeply impressed with the general escape from an awful danger. But strange elements are mixed together in the composition of human feelings, under any circumstances. For several days after letters were received by the management from parties requiring either a return of their money, or admission for another night, because a small part of the performance had been curtailed by the fire. These sticklers for the full value received, remind us of the respectable old lady in Colman's comic tale; who, when her son fell from the gallery to the pit, and broke his neck on the spot, as soon as she recovered from the shock, said to the money-taker,—

“ But I must have the shilling back you know,
As Moses did not see the show.”

On the occasion of the fire, Mr. C. Kean, with his usual liberality, distributed nearly 70% in gratuities to the carpenters and other labouring people who had loyally distinguished themselves. Mrs. C. Kean's calm and courageous exertions were the theme of univers

encomium. But amongst the most gratifying tokens of acknowledgment she received, was one proceeding from a humble source, but not the less acceptable on that account. Some of the working men of the theatre requested her acceptance of a handsomely-emblazoned testimonial, framed and glazed, bearing the following inscription :—

“PRESENTED TO
MRS. CHARLES KEAN.
BY THE
OPERATIVES OF THE PROPERTY DEPARTMENT,
OF THE
ROYAL PRINCESS'S THEATRE.
AS A MARK OF THEIR ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION
FOR HER HEROIC CONDUCT,
ON THE NIGHT OF THE FIRE AT THE ABOVE THEATRE,
MAY 13TH, 1857.”

Such unpretending gifts are less costly and ostentatious than diamond necklaces and bracelets, but they come from the heart, and are equally, if not more valuable, when transmitted as heir-looms; for, as Shakespeare truly says,—

“Never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.”

The public have long been accustomed to admire in Mrs. C. Kean the accomplished artist, whose rare endowments shed lustre on her profession, while they supply an encouraging example to her successors. But the public cannot step behind the more interesting scenes of her private life, and obtain a full knowledge of the wonderful activity and energy of her character. Perhaps the voice of personal friendship may be permitted hereto offer its tributary homage, founded on long experience and observation. While anxiously and affectionately

seconding her husband throughout his arduous career of management, her immediate province has been the superintendence of the wardrobe. An idea of the heavy responsibility of this office may be formed from the fact that in many of the great Shakesperean plays, no less than five hundred dresses have had to be designed and arranged; enough of itself to occupy the mind, and distract it from the study of such fine intellectual creations as *Constance*, *Hermione*, *Queen Katharine*, and *Lady Macbeth*. At all times and seasons, in sickness or in health, whether the tide of human affairs run placidly or becomes troubled, there is in Mrs. C. Keane an imperturbable self-command and equality of temperament, a warmth of active benevolence, a generous sympathy with, and consideration for the wants and failings of others, which excite the esteem and wonder of all who are acquainted with her. By what economy of time she is enabled to superintend three distinct households, independent of her professional duties, no stranger could possibly be made to understand. In addition to her own establishment, she has her aged mother and elder sister, helpless themselves, and entirely dependent on her care; and another widowed sister with an overwhelming family, who look to her sustaining counsel as their earthly guide and beacon. These are complicated duties, and nobly they have been discharged.

Another of Mr. J. M. Morton's agreeable trifles, always of French origin, entitled, "An Englishman's House is his Castle," appeared on the 11th of June; and on Wednesday, July the 1st, "Richard the Second," after the eighty-fifth night, was withdrawn for a time, to make way for "The Tempest."

Shakespeare's "Tempest," as all the world knows, is a work exclusively of imagination; beautiful in thought,

and original in execution. Coupled with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the two form, beyond all question, the richest and most delightful creations of fancy, which human faculty has ever embodied in the poetical or dramatic form. Supernatural and imaginative in the highest degree, they are as varied in character, as the elements of the inexhaustible genius which never exhibited the poverty of repeating itself. The fairy wands of *Oberon* and *Titania* have nothing in common with the necromantic staff of *Prospero*. The familiar agents, *Ariel* and *Puck*, the delicate and the mischievous, are as unlike each other as the masters to whom they are subservient. In Mr. C. Kean's treatment of these exquisite subjects, we trace again the careful study and unerring judgment which have on so many previous occasions won for him the reputation of Shakespeare's truest interpreter. *Ariel*, in particular, he has invested with an air of originality, the more surprising as the play has been elaborately "got up" under many successive managements. There have been *Ariels* in profusion, who could act and sing beyond the reach of critical censure, but they were full-grown voluptuous-looking females: no one could beguile himself into the delusion that they were anything less material or substantial. Mr. C. Kean has given us, and for the first time, the dainty spirit, the ethereal essence that could be compressed within a rifted pine, that appears formed to revel on a bat's back, to couch in a cowslip's bell, to tread the ooze of the salt deep, and to run upon the sharp edge of the wind.

Volumes have been written by heavy, matter-of-fact commentators, who delight in multiplying clouds and darkness, but seldom irradiate an obscurity,—to prove that Shakespeare founded the "Tempest" on real facts and places, that he drew from some known story or

published incident; that he is, in this instance, a mere compiler of events, or an ingenious adapter and enlarger of the thoughts of others. There is some confused story that the poet Collins had read the subject in a novel; but he failed to recollect the name, nor could any one else identify the work from his account of it. One elaborate pundit has endeavoured to show in a rambling essay, that Lampedusa was unquestionably the island of *Prospero*, because it *is*, or *was*, uninhabited, and lies somewhere in the latitude and longitude within which it is possible a ship might be wrecked on a voyage from Tunis to Naples. The claim set up for Bermuda is more ridiculously out of the question, and plainly disproved by the text. *Ariel* was once called up at midnight by *Prospero*, "to fetch dew from the still vexed *Bermoothes*." The magician would have had no occasion to send his messenger so many thousand leagues across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic for the precious exhalation, if his own island were the identical place in which he could have supplied himself by merely stepping to the entrance of his cell.

Malone and Chalmers each wrote and printed, for private distribution, tracts on the incidents from which the "Tempest" is derived. As literary rarities, their pamphlets have sold respectively for two and three guineas each; they contain ingenious conjectures, and help to prove what Shakespeare did not intend. We confess to no feelings in common with the dull, mathematical precision which seeks to extinguish the brightest rays of poetical fancy, and to measure an illimitable mind by the ordinary physical standard.

The play taken as a whole, is indeed,—

" A most majestic vision,
And harmonious charmingly."

Let due honour be rendered to Mr. C. Kean, for rescuing Shakespeare from all attempts to localize the scene of action. He says truly, "The enchanted island governed by the wand of *Prospero*, released from its association with the Bermudas, remains an imaginary kingdom, the scene of affecting and mysterious incidents, over which *Ariel* presides as the image of air, in spiritual contrast to the grosser *Caliban*, who embodies the earthly element."

Shakespeare has fixed no distinct time when the action of the "Tempest" is supposed to pass, either directly, or by inference. In the present revival, the thirteenth century was selected, as affording the opportunity of introducing a style of costume at once elegant and picturesque.

In earlier times, the "Tempest," like many of Shakespeare's acknowledged master-pieces, suffered terribly from ruthless mutilations. Sir W. Davenant, Dryden, and Shadwell, successively transformed it into a comedy and an opera; in which they were followed by Garrick, the elder Sheridan, and John Kemble, who retained the injudiciously introduced characters of *Dorinda* and *Hypolito*; thus completely destroying the idea of the author, and the key-note of feeling to the whole play,—the utter desolation of *Prospero*, with *Miranda* as his only consolation and companion. The last manager, too, with all his admitted classical taste, transplanted the opening incident of the storm and shipwreck to the second act, where its position is inconsistent. He also removed the celebrated speech in allusion to the introduced masque in the fourth act, beginning with "These our actors, as I foretold you, were all spirits," to the end of the play, and in exclusion of the original epilogue. Mr. Kean, following out the system he has invariably acted on in these glorious revivals, presents the text of Shakespeare inviolate, omitting merely an occasional

passage, or compressing a subordinate scene, with manifest advantage to the action of the piece. That the last opinion is correct, is evidenced by the approbation and attendance of eighty-seven successive audiences.

One of the most strikingly original conceptions in the new version of the "*Tempest*," was the entire execution of the music (with the exception of the duet in the masque) by an invisible choir, led by Miss Poole, whose mellow voice sounded with the rich, full clearness of a bell in the midst of, and above, the accompanying melody. Much of this music has hitherto been executed by *Ariel*, in presence of the audience, rendering too material and terrestrial that airy essence, through whose unseen agency, and by the delegated authority of *Prospero*, the train of magical wonders is produced throughout the play. *Ariel* formerly walked on and off the stage after the conventional mode of entrance and exit, moving with the substantial attributes of mortality; and when dismissed on an important errand, instead of "drinking the air" in rapid obedience, came deliberately forward, while the orchestra struck up a symphony, and sang to the musicians instead of to *Prospero*, an interpolated aria, beginning with, "Oh bid your faithful *Ariel* fly," with one eye fixed on the pit, and the other carefully watching the flourish of the conductor's bâton. Now, we were really presented with a "delicate spirit," at one moment descending in a ball of fire; at another, rising gently from a tuft of flowers; again, sailing on the smooth waters on the back of a dolphin; then, gliding noiselessly over the sands, as a water-nymph; and ever and anon, perched on the summit of a rock, riding on a bat, or cleaving mid-air with the velocity of lightning. The powers of modern stage mechanism are almost as marvellous as the gift ascribed to the magic wand and book of *Prospero*.

The play opens, as Shakespeare has described, with a ship in a tempest, struggling against the combined fury of winds and waves, and ultimately seeming to founder with all on board. How such an effect could be produced, within such a confined space, appeared to baffle the comprehension of the audience. As the mist of the storm disperses, the sun rises slowly on the magic island, the sea subsides, the waters recede from the "yellow sands," and *Prospero* is discovered with *Miranda*, standing on the point of a rock, superintending the effect of his art. He descends, and relates the events of his early life, his deposition and banishment through the treachery of his brother. *Ariel* and *Caliban* are summoned in succession. *Ferdinand* enters, and at the first sight, he and *Miranda* "change eyes."

In the second act, we have a romantic view of the interior of the island, where the *King of Naples*, with his attendant lords, has landed, and is hopelessly seeking for his lost son.

A great triumph of scenic exhibition is reserved for the third act. A long perspective of desolation gradually changes from barrenness to tropical luxuriance; trees rise from the earth, fountains and waterfalls gush from the rocks; while naiads, wood-nymphs, and satyrs enter, bearing fruit and flowers, with which they form a table, and having invited the *King* and his company to partake, suddenly disappear. These classic denizens of the woods are substituted for the "strange shapes" without any specified identity, hitherto represented by ludicrous and unmeaning monsters, with devils' heads and pitchforks, as being not only more poetical in themselves, but also more in accordance with the figure of the *Harpy* which rises in the midst of them. The novelty and elegance of the concluding dance excited universal admiration.

The fourth act is chiefly occupied with the gorgeous masque of *Juno*, *Ceres*, *Iris*, and their attendant deities; and richly here does *Prospero* exhibit the "vanity of his art," always assisted by his obedient familiar, *Ariel*. At the conclusion, *Caliban* and his sottish associates, in the plot to murder *Prospero*, are hunted and tortured by a legion of goblins, copied from furies depicted on Etruscan vases.

In the fifth act, all the characters are brought together by the controlling power of *Prospero*, in front of his cell. Mutual recognition takes place. The stately magician forgives the wrongs he has suffered from his false brother, bestows his daughter in marriage on *Ferdinand*, and prepares to re-ascend his ducal throne; having renounced for ever the supernatural power he had acquired, breaking his staff and drowning his book. Night enshrouds the scene. The released spirits take their flight from the island, through the air; morning breaks, and shows the royal vessel floating gently, and in perfect trim, on the unruffled waters. *Prospero*, standing on the deck, delivers the epilogue. The ship gradually sails off, the island recedes from sight, *Ariel* alone occupies the scene, suspended in the air, anxiously watching the departure of his late master, while a distant chorus of spirits dies softly away as the curtain falls. Beautifully contrasted is this last scene with the terror and despair of the opening shipwreck. The action and situation, the glass-like, motionless tranquillity of the unruffled waters, the glow of atmosphere, and the accompanying sentiment, more easily felt than described, reminded us of Moore's gently flowing lines, written when sailing within the tropics:—

"The sea is like a silvery lake,
And o'er its calm the vessel glides,
Gently, as if it fear'd to wake
The slumber of the silent tides."

Mr. C. Kean was dignified and impressive as *Prospero*. The character has always been undertaken by the leading tragedian of the day, although it affords no scope for the powers of a first-rate actor. There is neither passion nor variety. All that is required for an adequate representation is sustained solemnity of deportment, with graceful elocution, and here and there an impulse of natural feeling. But the potent necromancer so completely rules the action of the play, and every agent employed is so thoroughly subservient to his will, that the audience never lose sight of his paramount importance. Like Mephistopheles, he is felt even when he is not present, and is always expected to appear when wanted, as the *deus ex machina*, to solve every difficulty, and to settle every doubt.

The true spirit of *Ariel*, as now so artistically remodelled, was caught up by Miss Kate Terry with intuitive quickness. Miss Leclercq and Miss Bufton were delightfully coupled as *Miranda* and *Ferdinand*. Mr. Ryder had evidently studied *Caliban* with a perfect understanding of the author's intention. His execution of this difficult part (difficult, because so easily overdone), was one of the best of his many judicious assumptions. Harley, as *Trinculo*, and F. Matthews, as *Stephano*, brought out the comic relief of the play in excellent bearing. The scenery, dances, costumes, music, and mechanical effects, in every department, excited universal admiration.

¶ The public, in general, are scarcely reflective enough to estimate at their full value the amount of labour, time, and intellectual exertion, to say nothing of the expenditure of capital, by which such a revival as the "Tempest" is carried out to the perfection that appears so easy and natural when offered to public consideration. Mr. C. Kean, by a long series of these costly and elevated

experiments, has shown of what the stage is capable, when viewed in the light of a national instructor. He has added another, and a most influential medium to the many sources of educational improvement which at present engross the consideration of the best, the wisest, and the most exalted in the land.

It has often been said by enthusiasts who mourned over the degraded position of the stage, real or exaggerated, and who felt, or affected to feel, the misapplication of its noblest attributes, that the theatre *might be* rendered a valuable school, as well as a fascinating temple of recreation. The question has now ceased to be one of retarded or doubtful solution. It has been met by Mr. C. Kean with an unequivocal result. What has been suggested as possible, he has triumphantly accomplished. He has reformed, nay, he has even regenerated, the national drama of the country. He has revived a pure taste, which seemed to be verging towards extinction; and in an age when orators and philanthropists of every class are clamouring for intellectual progress, he has brought in, to further this great object, the most powerful and attractive auxiliary that refined intellect can supply. Museums are but dumb instructors. Galleries of sculpture and painting, with their catalogued treasures, are cold and formal. Lectures on philosophy, metaphysics, and mechanical science, are, of necessity, tinged with technical pedantries. Logic never charms, while it often wearies more than it convinces. The principle of mingling the *utile cum dulci*, of amusing while you teach, is as applicable to human nature now, as it was in the days of Horace. The child is a type of the man, and a sick child refuses the medicine which brings health when presented in its natural bitterness, but swallows it voraciously when sweetened with honey. The mass of mankind is more

likely to profit by instruction agreeably insinuated than harshly commanded. The theatre is a gentle monitor, and as such, acceptable to the tastes of a great majority; appealing to the reason, it is true, through the pleasant, though perhaps hazardous medium of the senses, and therefore open to objection, as easily pervertible to abuse. But the lesson is not the less efficacious, if judiciously administered, as the senses constitute the most powerful alembic through which knowledge can be instilled into the mind. The multitudes who have no time or taste for reading, whose faculties are not moulded for profound study, are readily impressed through the eyes and ears with those important truths, which, while they expand the understanding, soften and improve the heart. The harmonious poetry of Shakespeare presents nothing incompatible with the higher sources whence our soundest moral doctrines are derived. Persuasion often wins more than authority, and in this sense (we speak it reverently), the stage may avail when graver teaching fails. The quaint old poet, Herbert, took a correct view of man as he is, when he wrote :—

“ A verse may find him who a sermon flies,
And turn delight into a sacrifice.”

Mr. C. Kean closed his seventh season on the 21st of August, 1857. During the twelve months (wanting but ten days) of its duration, not more than twelve pieces were performed, of which three only, including the Pantomime, were new. Out of the two hundred and ninety acting nights, no less than two hundred and forty-two were devoted to Shakespeare. This fact speaks more conclusively in favour of Mr. Kean's system, and furnishes a more unanswerable reply to its opponents, than a folio of laboured panegyric.

CHAPTER XI.

VACATION OF SEVEN WEEKS—MR. AND MRS. KEAN VISIT VENICE—THE
 THEATRE OPENS ON THE 12TH OF OCTOBER, NEWLY DECORATED—
 TEMPEST RESUMED—RUNS ALTOGETHER FOR EIGHTY-SEVEN NIGHTS—
 REPRODUCTION OF RICHARD THE SECOND—PANTOMIME OF THE WHITE
 CAT—DEATH OF LADY BOOTHBY, FORMERLY MRS. NISBETT—MR. KEAN
 ELECTED A FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES—FESTIVAL PER-
 FORMANCES AT THE OPERA HOUSE ON OCCASION OF THE PRINCESS
 ROYAL'S MARRIAGE—ABSENCE OF MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN—OPINION
 EXPRESSED IN THE PAPERS—MACBETH AT THE OPERA HOUSE—HAMLET
 AT THE PRINCESS'S ON THE SAME EVENING—DEMONSTRATION IN THE
 PRINCESS'S THEATRE ON THE 19TH OF JANUARY—STATEMENT OF FACTS

THE Princess's Theatre remained closed for seven weeks, during which time it was entirely re-painted and decorated in a light and tasteful style.

During the recess, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean made a short trip to the continent, passing by Paris and Lausanne, and across the Alps to Milan, Verona, and Venice. Mr. C. Kean had long desired to see the "Queen of the Adriatic," and as the "Merchant of Venice" was intended for a leading feature in the forthcoming season, he determined to verify the authorities by personal examination.

On the 12th of October, 1857, the theatre re-opened, and the "Tempest" was resumed. The dramatic horizon looked cloudy at this juncture. The American defalcations had produced a commercial panic, the extent and influence of which was undefined. Many failures were gazetted, and more anticipated. From that day to this there were announcements of actual, and repos-

of expected bankruptcy, which checked the ordinary current of society, and drew away attention from public amusements. Under similar contingencies theatres are always amongst the greatest sufferers. We speak of England exclusively, for in France the general feeling takes an opposite turn. During the horrors of the Revolution, under the reign of terror, when the guillotine knocked at every door, and no one could tell how soon his own turn would succeed that of his neighbour, the theatres were crowded nightly. In 1814, and again in 1815, after Waterloo, when the cannon of the allies, frowning from the heights of Belleville and Montmartre threatened Paris with destruction, the loungers of the Boulevards sat on their accustomed seats in constitutional carelessness, and repaired to the Odéon, the Gaieté, or the Varietés at the usual hour, as if things were progressing in their customary routine.

After a run of eighty-seven nights, the "Tempest" was finally withdrawn, and "Richard the Second" again assumed its place in the bills. Amongst the characters which have won for Mr. C. Kean his acknowledged position as the first tragedian of the age, many sound critics were disposed to assign the foremost place to his *Richard the Second*. They looked upon it as an original effort to be paralleled with *Louis the Eleventh*. None of his most eminent predecessors, as in many other instances, had associated their names with the part. It suggested no comparisons. Betterton and Booth, Quin, Garrick, and John Kemble, had passed it by. Edmund Kean, it is true, elicited from it some brilliant points, but although the performance greatly enhanced his individual reputation for the moment, it retained no permanent place on his acting list. It remained for his son to identify himself with the deposed Plantagenet. A play, never before

attractive, which on its first production commanded eighty-five repetitions, and within a few months is again resumed for twenty-seven more, must be assisted with some controlling element of success, which no beauty of language, no perfection of decorative accompaniment, no amount of archaeological accuracy could of themselves supply. This great element must be sought for in the power of acting; that rarely bestowed endowment by which alone the purpose of the poet can be adequately reflected, and through which channel only the by-gone ages of the world are called into new existence, placed before the sight, and presented to the mind of the spectator and auditor, as in a living panorama. The scenes of memorable deeds, the actions and attributes of remarkable men, are thus stamped on our memories and rendered familiar to our perception with an enduring strength, which no other medium of information, no silent study in the closet, no consumption of the midnight lamp, no recorded description could possibly impart.

At the last session of the Society of Antiquaries, during the summer of 1857, on the memorable 18th of June, Mr. Kean was elected a fellow of that erudite body, and on the 19th of November following, took his seat in regular form as an admitted member. This compliment was as flattering, as it was well earned and judiciously bestowed.

On the 16th of November, a new farce was brought forward at the Princess's, cleverly adapted from the French, by Mr. John Oxenford, entitled "A Case of Conscience." It ran for many nights up to the production of the pantomime, and may be ranked amongst the most agreeable of the light pieces usually selected at the Princess's Theatre to play in the Shakespearean revivals. The pantomime, founded on a well-known

story, was entitled "Harlequin and the White Cat; or, the Princess Blanche-flower and her Three Godmothers." This branch of the dramatic art appears destined never to lose its Christmas attraction, although it has been often said that the true genius of pantomime has been for some time *effete*, and died with Grimaldi. But there is as much immortality in the *Clown* as in *Punch*. It is quite certain that Grimaldi is no longer here to enliven us with his fathomless inexpressibles that held every thing in the world, his inimitable thieveries, his jokes, his songs, and his dialogue; but another style of humour has succeeded with another generation. The laugh is as unremitting as ever, although the prompting excitement is not exactly the same. There is something in the natural constitution of man in the abstract, that attaches him to pantomime. It argues ill for the moral temperament of any one who cannot enjoy this glorious mummery. We should hesitate to select such an unhappy exception for a travelling companion or a next door neighbour. If Heraclitus were to return to earth and secure a stall on any given night during the holidays, we doubt if he would ever again lapse into his constitutional melancholy. If Cato, the censor, could stalk in after him, with scorn and anger at his heart, and a decree for the abolition of theatres in his pocket, we are prepared to offer the long odds that he would be beaten by the epidemic mirth with which his eyes and ears would be assailed. At the first peal he would suspend his purpose, at the second, his grim philosophy would relax into a smile, and at the third, he would ramble his decree under foot. If any of our readers labour under low spirits without knowing why,—that depressing malady of the mind which the learned denominate *hypochondria*,—we earnestly recommend them to try a course of pantomime, which will prove a

more certain, as well as a much more palatable mode of cure than the whole series of scientific remedies, with hard appellations, which supplant each other as quickly as the fashions alter, and not unfrequently before we are able to spell their names.

On the 18th of January, 1858, died Lady Boothby, better known as Mrs. Nisbett, one of the most fascinating actresses of modern times. Her joyous, resonant laugh, will never be forgotten by those who remember her as *Lady Gay Spanker*, ("London Assurance,") or as *Constance*, in the "Love Chase." She was the eldest daughter of the late Lieutenant Frederick Hayes Macnamara, 52nd Foot, and of his wife, Jane Elizabeth Williams. At the time of her death she was in her forty-sixth year, having been born on the 1st of April, 1812. She evinced theatrical talent as a child, and in consequence of family misfortunes adopted the stage as a profession before she had completed fourteen. She appeared at Drury Lane when about seventeen years of age, and soon took rank in the first class of comedy, a position she maintained through her life. In January, 1831, when still under twenty, she married Captain John Alexander Nisbett, of the Life Guards; who, within a few months, was killed from the effects of an accident received while trying a vicious and untrained horse. On the death of her husband, Mrs. Nisbett felt herself under the necessity of returning to the stage; and, having for several seasons delighted the London public by her brilliant acting, she was again led to the altar by Sir William Boothby, Bart., of Ashbourne Hall. In about three years Sir William died, and she found herself a second time a widow without adequate provision, and once more compelled to resume her theatrical profession. But failing health soon demanded her final retirement from public life. Her

last days were spent in domestic retirement with her mother and eldest brother, whose almost sudden deaths within a short period of each other, added to the loss of a dearly beloved sister, so wrought upon her exhausted frame that she was attacked with the illness which, in two days, terminated her existence.

On the 25th of January, 1858, the Princess Royal of England was united to Prince Frederick William of Prussia, heir presumptive to the throne of Frederick the Great; representative also of a staunch Protestant family, the ancient allies of England, and previously connected with the royal line of Hanover by the marriage of the late Duke of York with the eldest daughter of King Frederick William the Second. Great care had been taken to bring the young couple into previous acquaintanceship, and to give them opportunities of becoming mutually attached; a guarantee for future happiness too slightly estimated in royal alliances. In these points the marriage was highly acceptable to the feelings of the English people. Prussia, it is true, was looked upon suspiciously in a political sense. She had played a doubtful part during the Russian war; had carried the produce of our enemies to and fro in the ports of the Baltic to the detriment of British trade, and in evasion of existing treaties; but this was looked upon as arising more from the personal bias of the King than from the wishes of his nation, who were supposed to side warmly with us in their hearts. Prussia was awkwardly placed, with an open frontier, almost in the jaws of her gigantic neighbour, and in danger of being swallowed up, in case of a rupture, before distant allies could arrive in time for rescue. Kingdoms of more internal strength, and less accessible to foreign attack, had set the example of a temporising policy with infinitely less excuse. England has so cor-

promised herself more than once when misgoverned by men who, with little reputation of their own to lose, bestowed even less thought on the honour of their country.

On the occasion of this auspicious marriage, many royal foreigners were invited as the guests of our gracious Queen. Amongst other festivities, a series of four dramatic performances under the immediate patronage of her Majesty, and directed by Mr. Mitchell, of Bond Street, was announced to take place at the Opera House, in the Haymarket, selected for the purpose from its size and superior accommodation. These performances were to consist of a tragedy, a comedy, and farce, an English and an Italian opera; the two leading objects being to gratify the public with an unusual display of royalty congregated in honour of a national event, and to exhibit before that august assemblage the most perfect specimens of English dramatic art that living talent could supply. Nothing could be better in idea than this plan, which nevertheless, like many others equally well laid, was marred in execution by clumsy diplomacy that might have been easily rectified. Both objects failed. The absence of several first-rate names, particularly those of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean, with a total want of skilful organization in the disposable strength, reduced a portion of the performances to a scale of painful mediocrity, that must have sadly disappointed the strangers who were expected to wonder and admire; while the general public were ostracised by the fabulous prices of admission, which the speculators deemed it convenient and were permitted to exact. They were, in fact, the only parties who had reason to be satisfied with the result.* The actors

* As much as eight, ten, and even twelve thousand pounds has been named as their net profit; but this must be taken as mere report, resting upon no evidence beyond probable conjecture.

wasted their efforts on an audience drawn together by the show in front, and not by the professional talent, which they could see at any time, to more advantage and with undivided attention, in the theatres from whence they were drafted.

As soon as it became known that "Macbeth" was to take the lead in these festival performances, and that the principal characters would not be sustained by Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean, people began naturally to inquire the cause of this omission. It seemed unaccountable that the first actor and actress of the day, and the selected director of her Majesty's private theatricals at Windsor, should have no part in an arrangement apparently emanating from royal desire. Much disquisition took place on the subject, and many paragraphs appeared in the journals, conveying something like a general impression, coupled with surprise, that Mr. C. Kean, under the avowed circumstances, must either have given cause of offence in some quarter, or had not been treated, for some reason or other, with the courtesy to which he was entitled. A few extracts, taken promiscuously from the papers, will show that opinion, however differently expressed, and based on such imperfect facts as had transpired, verged always towards the same point.

The *Morning Herald* wrote thus (18th of January) :—

"Much conversation has arisen, and many conflicting statements have gone abroad, on the subject of this forthcoming dramatic festival, as it has been designated. Amongst the points which have been most discussed in connexion with the matter, is the absence from the announced programme of Mr. C. Kean and his company. This omission must appear the more surprising to the public from the fact, that Mr. C. Kean has for

many years conducted, with marked approbation, her Majesty's private plays at Windsor. We cannot pretend to penetrate completely the mystery in which the transaction is involved; but we have been informed that Mr. Kean, in the course of the brief negotiations which took place upon the point, held the opinion that all the leading theatres might be thrown open in celebration of an event which may be regarded as a subject of national congratulation; and that he expressed his readiness to carry out such an arrangement in his own establishment. Whatever may be the view we entertain of the misunderstanding which has thus arisen, we cannot help regretting that from this theatrical commemoration of a most interesting ceremony, the greatest of our tragedians should be excluded."

The following article appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* (January 15):—

"Many rumours are current with reference to the dramatic representations which are to take place at her Majesty's Theatre, in honour of the Princess Royal's marriage; and the plan, as at present announced, has not been met by any very warm sympathy on the part of the public.

"Why could not the projected entertainments have taken place alternately at the regular theatres? The different plays would have been better acted on their own ground; the public expectation would have been more amply gratified; and the remuneration would have flowed into more legitimate channels. 'Macbeth' is to commence the series; but, in the absence of our leading performers, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean, it can scarcely convey to her Majesty's foreign guests a correct impression of our national stage. Mr. Kean, as we understand, has declined to assist in a private com-

mercial speculation. In the same manner, an English opera is to constitute another night's performance, without the presence of our first tenor, Mr. Sims Reeves."

In the *Examiner* (16th January, 1858) we find this notice :—

"The arrangements, as they have been announced, with reference to the four performances at the Opera House, under her Majesty's patronage, on the occasion of the Princess Royal's marriage, have given rise to much conversation, and, we are sorry to add, not a little discontent. The professed object is the gratification of the public, who will virtually, however, be shut out, owing to the enormous scale of the prices of admission, and the exclusive construction of the theatre selected. The affair is avowedly a commercial speculation on the part of the undertaker, entered into at his own risk ; and a great portion of the boxes and stalls being farmed out to the acknowledged theatrical agents, they will, naturally enough, exact prices rising in proportion to the extent and eagerness of the demand ; while the name and presence of the Queen, with those of her royal and illustrious guests, will, of course, be sedulously paraded and turned to the best pecuniary account, like any other novelties or attractions of the hour. All this, indeed, is taking place already.

"A correspondent of the *Globe* of Thursday evening complains loudly of the extortions practised under the sanction of her Majesty's name, with reference to the entertainments in question. The *Daily News* of Friday publishes another letter, protesting against the same proceedings in still stronger terms, and detailing facts within the writer's personal knowledge.

"Surely there is something improper and undignified

in all this, which it would have been both good taste and good sense to avoid. It is, also, naturally asked why a gentleman, in no way connected with the English stage, should have been selected to direct these performances in preference to Mr. Charles Kean, so long the conductor of her Majesty's private plays at Windsor, not to speak of his professional eminence and merited popularity. The name of an actor so distinguished and accomplished as Mr. Kean does not even appear in the programme. If, as we have heard it stated, Mr. Kean objected to co-operate with Mr. Mitchell, on the ground that the plan was, in fact, a private undertaking, injurious and opposed to the interests of his own and the other regular theatres, and ill calculated to afford any substantial satisfaction to the public, we must say the objection appears to us to have been perfectly just. A little more tact in the management of these festivities, might certainly have been displayed with advantage. The plan of alternate visits to the principal theatres would have produced more general satisfaction; or each manager might have been allowed to superintend his own play, with a fair share in the profit, if any, of the night's performance."

The following appeared in the *Court Circular* of the 16th of January:—

"The forthcoming 'Dramatic Festival,' in celebration of the Princess Royal's marriage, does not appear to increase in popular favour; and it is generally felt that no opportunity will be afforded to the *people* of participating in what, on the surface, appears intended for their gratification. Although the royal party will be present at four public theatrical performances, these are rendered so exclusive, by an enormous scale of

prices, that only the most opulent of her Majesty's subjects will be able to behold the august assemblage.

"Neither can any benefit accrue to the legitimate London managers from this mode of appropriating the royal patronage. An opposing attraction, and a very powerful one, is raised up against their own theatres, in the heart of the Christmas season, and nothing whatever is vouchsafed to them to compensate for the unexpected injury.

"To this view of the affair we are, doubtless, to attribute the fact that Mr. Charles Kean is not included in the list of those who contribute to the 'festival entertainment.' Nothing beyond surmise has yet transpired with regard to the omission of a name that, alone, would have made the performances representative, *inter alia*, of English tragedy as it now exists in the metropolis. The cause of Mr. C. Kean's absence will certainly be demanded by the public. A Shakespearean drama played before an assembly of crowned heads, without the assistance of the great Shakespearean actor of the age, is too strange a fact not to elicit anxious inquiry amongst all classes of this independent and intellectual capital."

The "festival performance" of "Macbeth" came off on Tuesday, the 19th of January. The day after, the following notice appeared in the *Times*:—

"It is not usual, in recording public festivals, or other exhibitions, to note down what does *not* take place; but, nevertheless, an omission may be so exceedingly important as to render the blank it leaves quite as conspicuous as any object presented to the eye. The Roman procession immortalized by Tacitus, in which the busts that were *not* carried outshone a host

of sculptured Manlii and Quinctii, is familiar to the merest dabbler in classical literature; and those who have not smattered so far, may, if they please, illustrate the omission to which we here immediately allude, by imagining a Lord Mayor's show, with the Lord Mayor's carriage empty. Of course, we refer to the absence of Mr. Charles Kean's name from the list of the artists engaged last night as representatives of English tragedy. By histrionic genius, matured of late years to its highest degree of perfection, and by a splendid style of stage management that has made the production of each succeeding season eclipse its predecessor, Mr. Charles Kean has made the Princess's Theatre the acknowledged home of the Shakespearcan drama. The days of the patents have passed away, but the privilege of holding an exclusive rank for the performance of the tragic drama has now belonged for several years to the Princess's Theatre; and to the exertions of Mr. Charles Kean, in his twofold capacity, is this high position to be solely attributed. No one could, indeed, ignore the unquestionable merits of Mr. Phelps in raising the character of Sadler's Wells, and implanting a veneration for Shakespeare in a public previously accustomed to lower forms of the drama. But, setting all other consideration aside, it is still impossible to regard the Pentonville district as the focus of the metropolitan drama, or to accept the presence of Mr. Phelps as a reason for the absence of Mr. Charles Kean. 'Why is the manager of the Princess's Theatre and of the Windsor theatricals not here?' is a question that must have forced itself last night upon every person who had not mixed in circles where theatrical politics form a staple of conversation. Italian opera will be represented by Mr. Lumley's company, with Signor Giuglini and Mademoiselle Piccolomini, both (for the first time) in

“La Somnambula;” English opera will be represented by the Pyne-Harrison company, engaged on the last new work by Mr. Balfe; the comic drama will be represented by contingents from various theatres; but tragedy is performed without the artist who, above all, is considered its representative. Here is, indeed, a case of the omitted Brutus—of the black cloth of Faliero.

“A case so remarkable needs some explanation, and we believe the facts are something like these, though we by no means warrant them proof against correction. Mr. Charles Kean was not passed over in the selection of actors to play at the ‘festival performances,’ but, on the contrary, was, in the first instance, requested by Mr. Mitchell, who has the management of the solemnities, to undertake the character of *Macbeth*. The request, it should be distinctly understood, was made by Mr. Mitchell in his own capacity, as a speculator in the advantages to be derived from a theatre on the occasion of a royal visit; and, therefore, Mr. Charles Kean was not bound to regard it as a demand or invitation from the Court. Exercising the right of choice which, under these circumstances, belonged to him, he refused to take any part in the ‘festival performances.’ Probably he considered that, after many years’ good service as superintendent of the Windsor theatricals, the management of a theatrical entertainment associated with a royal marriage might have been confided to his well-tried energies; probably, too, he thought that ‘*Macbeth*’ produced under other direction than his own might not impress the foreign visitors of this country with a correct notion as to the manner in which Shakespeare’s plays are put upon the stage for the first-class audiences of this country. At all events, this much is certain, that he acted on the broad prin-

ciple, that one manager is not bound, by right or by courtesy, to act for the benefit of another manager; and this much, also, is certain, that his refusal to play is highly commended by many adepts in theatrical politics. In an article merely intended to record the events of an evening, it is not our intention to plunge into the depths of a controversy. We merely wish to explain, in as few terms as possible, the alleged reason of Mr. Kean's non-participation in the 'festival performances.'

"However, the attractions of the stage were but of secondary importance last night. The royal party did not arrive till deep in the second act of 'Macbeth,' just when Mr. Phelps had begun the famous dagger soliloquy. Now, the royal party was what the audience expressly came to see, and the eyes constantly directed towards the large empty box denoted an anxiety that did not in the least refer to the fate of *Duncan*. On the entrance of Her Majesty everybody, of course, arose, and then the scrutiny of the brilliant assemblage occupied all who could get a sight of it. So, somehow or other, the tragedy reached its conclusion, not closely watched in its tardy course, and leaving a strong impression that spoken dramas do not greatly move Operatic audiences. Music is evidently required to arouse the sympathies in Her Majesty's Theatre, for even the compositions ascribed to Lock, and so often scorned, proved welcome last night. How, in the presence of that frigid public, must Mr. Phelps have longed for the hearty Shakespearicans of his own district! How, if the report of the frigidity reached the ears of Mr. Charles Kean, must he have rejoiced to think how well he was out of the affair! It is no joke to play tragedy before a *blasé* public, whose whole mind is absorbed by a royal box, and who dislike to find their

meditations interrupted by a ruffle of applause. Mr. Phelps manfully sustained his energies to the end, and well earned the plaudits that, on the fall of the curtain, proceeded from the dramatically-disposed portion of the audience. Miss Helen Faucit, also, was called for at the close, and though she did not immediately make her appearance, she stood prominently amongst the singers during the performance of 'God save the Queen.'

"The singing of this anthem was the real feature of the evening, and the spectacle presented when the whole audience rose, including the occupants of the royal box, was such as could not easily be found beyond the precincts of our magnificent Opera House. For presenting a royal party to the public, and for demonstrating the feeling of that public to Royalty, there is no place like her Majesty's Theatre. At the first note of the national anthem all frigidity had vanished, and the acclamations of an audience that completely filled the house were heard on every side."

On the evening of the performance of "Macbeth" at the Opera House, Mr. Kean appeared as *Hamlet* at his own theatre. The feeling prevalent in the public mind that he ought at that moment to be engaged elsewhere, and that he had received a slight in the omission, led to a special demonstration of respect on this particular occasion. The house was crammed to suffocation in every part soon after the opening of the doors, and hundreds were turned away, unable to obtain entrance. The stalls and boxes were filled by a company more than usually brilliant; the pit and gallery contained hosts of enthusiastic Shakespeareans, assembled to mark their high estimate of his living representative's claims and position, as actor and manager.

On his entry, Mr. Kean was received with a perfect

storm of approbation. The stalls rose in a body ; their example was followed by boxes, pit, and gallery. Cheers upon cheers resounded through the house, and some minutes elapsed before the business of the scene was thought of, or the play could resume its course. Doubtless many of his own personal friends were present ; but they alone could not have produced the *furore* which manifested itself. It was a genuine and hearty expression of public feeling, on account of what was evidently considered a public wrong.

Mr. Kean appeared for the moment to be overpowered by this spontaneous burst, but he manned himself speedily, and went through his arduous part with redoubled energy, taxed to its highest exertion. Every point was eagerly seized by the audience. The applause was almost unremitting. At the close of the great scene with his mother, which terminates the third act, *Hamlet* was loudly called for, and was obliged to appear before the curtain. The call was unanimously renewed at the termination of the tragedy, when Mr. Kean, having bowed his acknowledgments, retired. The audience were not satisfied with this. A continued and more enthusiastic demand for his return made it evident that he was expected to say something. He now felt it his duty to obey. Accordingly he addressed the house briefly, but pithily, as follows :—

“ Ladies and gentlemen,—It is not my custom ever to address an audience, except on the concluding night of a season ; but I fear that were I not on the present occasion to respond to so unanimous an ebullition of public feeling as you have honoured me with this evening, my silence might be wrongly interpreted. I am deeply sensible of your kindness, and beg you to accept

my heartfelt thanks. It would be affectation in me to pretend not to understand the motives which have influenced this particular excitement, and it is another convincing instance, in addition to the many I have already received, that when a public man acts in a conscientious and upright manner, the public will always afford him their sympathy and support. Throughout my life I have coveted the verdict of public opinion, professionally and socially, and this evening impresses on me a most grateful conviction that my wishes are realized."

These few appropriate words, containing a world of condensed meaning, appeared to create a deep sensation, and produced a general repetition of the preceding applause. Several papers in articles on the events of this evening, and with reference to the affair generally, suggested that some further elucidation would be desirable, and that Mr. Kean was, in fact, called upon to supply the deficiency. He thought differently, felt satisfied with the result, had no inclination to stir up a controversy that might lead to disrespectful conclusions, and remained silent. In a biographical work such as the present, and in treating of a remarkable incident in the life of an eminent professional man, the same reserve might seem to be affected and unnecessary, while it would inevitably lead to misconstruction. We therefore now state the facts as they occurred, without presuming to venture either comment or inference.

Soon after the plan was resolved on, Mr. Mitchell called upon Mr. Kean and proposed to him, as a matter of business, to perform "Macbeth" with his company, at the Italian Opera House. He stated that he had taken that theatre for the purpose of giving three or four dramatic and operatic representations during the

festivities consequent on the Princess Royal's marriage ; that the scheme emanated from the Court, who had entrusted him with the details of carrying it out, and that it would receive the patronage of Her Majesty. He distinctly explained that this was a speculation, the loss or profit of which rested with himself, and that he might either win or lose a large sum of money. Mr. Kean asked whether Mr. Mitchell was instructed to make any overture for his co-operation from higher quarters, and was answered with an explicit negative. He requested a short time to consider the proposal, and in the course of the same evening replied in the following letter :—

“ MY DEAR MR. MITCHELL,—

“ I have given the subject you submitted to me this morning my deepest consideration, and regret extremely that the conclusion at which I have arrived is opposed to your wishes as expressed to me.

“ I cannot but feel that the arrangement you contemplate with regard to the Haymarket Opera House, must prove most detrimental to my interest in every way, and that in consequence I shall require all the attraction at my command to counteract such an overwhelming opposition. The absence of my professional services on the occasion in question can be of no possible consideration to you ; for the very fact of your being so fortunate as to secure the exclusive permission of announcing Her Majesty's intended visits, must fill the theatre from floor to ceiling, without reference to the performers or performances. From my regard for you personally, and my high estimation of your character, I would waive any objection that did not involve so large a sacrifice ; but as it is, the reasons for

my present refusal to meet your views are unfortunately too numerous and too powerful.

“Yours truly,

“CHARLES KEAN.*

This letter produced a second visit from Mr. Mitchell, who again endeavoured with much urgency to induce Mr. Kean to rescind his determination, and in the course of the conversation, implied that the Court would perhaps be annoyed at his refusal to co-operate. Mr. Kean replied, “If this is your speculation, Mr. Mitchell, as a matter of business I am justified in declining. If the Court were interested in it, as a matter of courtesy, in consideration of the position I have held for so many years as director of Her Majesty’s private theatricals, I should assuredly have received some personal communication through the usual channel.” These are the words that were used, for the writer was present at the interview. Mr. Kean then, to prevent any possibility of mistake, assured Mr. Mitchell that he had no wish whatever to impede his plans; that he would not have undertaken the speculation had it been proposed to him; and that even now, if the slightest indication should be conveyed to him that his services were desired, he would lay aside all objections, and instantly comply. Mr. Mitchell left him in evident anxiety to bring about this result, and with an expectation that it would be easy of accomplishment. In due course of time, the following letter decided the question.

* As a proof that Mr. Kean’s professional opinion as to the injurious effect of these performances was justly based, it may be stated here that at that very period, usually the most productive of the London season, he sustained a loss of several thousand pounds.

“ London, Royal Library, Old Bond Street,
“ Dec. 7th, 1857.

“ DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“ I had an interview with on Saturday, and again to day. He seems quite unwilling to adopt my suggestions, and I therefore feel that I ought not to trouble you any further upon the subject.

“ Yours faithfully

“ JOHN MITCHELL.”

Here the matter ended. A correspondence subsequently ensued between a gentleman of high position at the Court, and Mr. Kean; but being of an unofficial character, it was obviously not admissible into these volumes.

It is quite true, as stated in some of the newspapers, that Mr. Kean proposed to open his theatre gratuitously to the public, on a given night, to mark his respect for the occasion, provided it would suit her Majesty's convenience to honour him with her presence. The arrangement was found to be impracticable. But another fact, no less true, was not stated in the papers, namely, that Mr. Kean conveyed, in the clearest terms, to the proper authorities, his readiness to obey the slightest indication of his royal mistress's wishes which might be communicated; but such an honour was not vouchsafed. There is no reason to deny that Mr. Kean did at the time feel deeply pained by the little consideration extended towards him throughout these proceedings. Can this be surprising? He had filled for many years, by express selection, the distinguished post of director of her Majesty's private theatricals. In the discharge of that flattering, but at the same time, delicate and difficult duty, he had encountered heavy pecuniary loss, and many profes-

sional annoyances ; but the coveted approbation of his august employers was dearer to his heart than all other considerations. Public and printed testimony have on more than one occasion been borne to the enthusiasm with which he has invariably prosecuted his art, and the total absence of selfish or mercenary feeling by which his actions have been governed. Let that evidence now be corroborated by one who founds his knowledge on long and intimate acquaintanceship. In the case under immediate discussion, Mr. Kean blended the double feeling of ardent loyalty to his queen, and an anxious desire to uphold the interests of his profession. Whatever might have been his personal convictions on the subject, all would have given way at once, had a single word implied the desire which would have been joyfully hailed as a command.

CHAPTER XII.

TWO NEW FARCES: THE STOCK EXCHANGE, OR THE GREEN BUSINESS, AND SAMUEL IN SEARCH OF HIMSELF ON EASTER MONDAY—REVIVAL OF KING LEAR, FROM THE TEXT OF SHAKESPEARE—TATE'S ALTERATION—GENERAL AND CRITICAL REMARKS—DEATH OF MRS. DAVISON, FORMERLY MISS DUNCAN—LAST PERFORMANCE AT THE OLD ADELPHI THEATRE IN THE STRAND—PECULIAR STYLE OF AUDIENCE, ACTORS, AND AUTHORS—REVIVAL OF THE MERCHANT OF VENICE—NOVELTIES INTRODUCED—MR. KEAN'S SHYLOCK—MRS. C. KEAN'S PORTIA—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE PLAY, AND ACTORS OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS—THE NEW PRELUDE OF DYING FOR LOVE.

ON Easter Monday, April the 5th, 1858, "Faust and Marguerite" was re-produced, after an interval of two years. There was no change in the cast. A new Comedietta, by Mr. Charles Dance, preceded the substantial dish of the evening; this was entitled "The Stock Exchange, or the Green Business;" and was received with marked approbation. Its success depended more on the excellence of blended acting than on the predominant effect of one or two parts. In this respect nothing could be better. "Samuel in search of himself" (by Mr. Sterling Coyne and Mr. Coape), which concluded the bill of fare, was farcical and extravagant to the last extreme, well adapted in the position assigned to it, for the purpose of sending an Easter audience "laughing to their beds." The title might have puzzled *Œdipus* as far as regards analogy or association with the plot of this amusing bagatelle, which was much indebted for its success to the acting of our old friend Harley, fresh and mercurial

to the last, as a novice of yesterday. "King Lear" was produced by Mr. C. Kean on Saturday, the 17th of April. *Lear* is in many respects the most powerful of Shakespeare's glorious imaginings; this amounts to saying that it is the finest tragedy the human mind has ever conceived. The absolute palm, in the opinion of most critics, lies dubiously between Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, and Lear. The poet's materials in Lear, as far as plot and incident extend, are derived from apocryphal history and acknowledged fable. From Geoffrey of Monmouth, an authority of little value, although transcribed by Holinshed; from an older play, a preceding ballad, and a tale in the "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sidney, which supplies the episode, so skilfully interwoven, of Gloucester and his sons. If we are to admit, which we are not disposed to do, that Shakespeare had but the narrow allowance of classic learning so resolutely insisted on by Ben Jonson, Dr. Farmer, and others, he must, at least, have possessed an extensive acquaintance with English literature, and a memory as unbounded as his genius. On such substrata, collected from many mines, but amplified by his own exhaustless fancy, he created those unparalleled combinations of philosophy and poetry which have placed his name and works in a category by themselves. This power of transmuting rough materials to costly metal never has been, and we may safely predict, never will be equalled, except under direct inspiration.

Shakespeare enjoyed the happiness accorded to few writers, of living fame, and his immortality may bid defiance to time and change. But after the Restoration, and throughout the profligate reigns of the Stuarts, he was nearly forgotten. In a list of more than fifty plays, enumerated by the theatrical chroniclers of the day, and running over a period of

twenty years, from 1663 to 1683, we discover only four of Shakespeare's, including *Titus Andronicus*. So thoroughly was the great poet lost sight of, that when Nahum Tate produced his mangled adaptation of "Lear," in 1681, he had the audacity to call it his own and it was noticed as such, at a later period, in two numbers of the *Tatler*. This alteration became the established text, with trifling changes and omissions; it held possession of the stage for nearly a century and a half, from 1681 until within the last twenty years; and this spurious version was successively adopted by all the great actors, from Betterton, Booth, Garrick, and Barry, down to John Kemble and Edmund Kean inclusive.

"King Lear," as presented at the Princess's Theatre, was considered by many as the most difficult triumph which Mr. Kean had yet accomplished. His historical lectures, for so the series of revivals might be denominated, have wrought a complete revolution in public taste, and placed Shakespeare on a loftier pinnacle than he ever occupied in those days so pathetically bemoaned by the advocates of supposed theatrical degeneracy, and worshipped by them and their followers as the age of giants, and the Augustan era of the British stage. Augcan perhaps, would be a more appropriate term when we consider the mass of accumulated dross by which the genuine ore of the poet had been so long corrupted, and the purifying process it had to go through.

In his arrangement of the text, Mr. Kean omits all repulsive and coarse passages, while the necessary condensation gives more rapidity to the tide of passion, and connects the incidents in an unbroken chain. The putting out of *Gloster's* eyes is one of those exceptional horrors that emulates the supper of *Thyestes*, or the

visible murder of her children by *Medea*. This is merely glanced at in a few lines of dialogue, and thus a leading objection is removed without injury to the plot. Shakespeare has identified the story of the passionate old king and his three daughters with England, at a time when "the land was peopled with rude heathens, and the minds and hearts of men, as yet unreclaimed by the softening influences of Christianity, were barbarous and cruel."* No exact period is indicated, but Mr. Kean has supposed a distinct era for the action of the play (the eighth century), sufficiently remote to assimilate with the subject, but still within the scope of reliable authority for scenery and costume. When fact is so qualified by fiction that it is impossible to separate these conflicting ingredients, no extent of antiquarian perseverance can reach the minute accuracy which animates into living reflection the more certain age of King John, Richard II., or Henry VIII. Mr. Kean has so skilfully employed the resources which unwearied research enabled him to collect, that in the arrangements of this great drama—in the pictorial accompaniments, whether sylvan or architectural,—in the dresses, arms, and implements,—he presented us with an original picture of early Saxon England,—fresh, glowing, and characteristic, which surprises and delights the eye, while it leaves on the mind the strong impression of historical truth. In all those points it is evident that Mr. Kean trusts to no model, and refers to no previous example. He forms his own conception of Shakespeare's plays, casting aside all reminiscences of traditional precedent. Not satisfied to pursue the uncertain and ill-defined track which allured so many followers, he strikes out new paths with the hardihood of intuitive genius. His mind travels with the time,

* Mr. Kean's preface.

and adapts itself to the age that sits in judgment on his efforts. Instead of saying, "I will do this because it has been done before," we see clearly he says, "I will avoid all these errors, for I know how they can be remedied;" and he may appeal to public opinion in testimony that his theory and practice are equally sound.

The originality so strongly manifested by Mr. C. Kean in his arrangement of the play, was even more conspicuous in his performance of the leading character; perhaps the most arduous on the stage, and the greatest touchstone of the actor's power which even the exhaustless imagination of Shakespeare has created. *Lear* presents an incarnation of impulsive passion—a temperament easily goaded to madness under the circumstances in which the poet has placed him. The sufferings he goes through can only be relieved by death. How thoroughly we sympathise with *Kent*, when he closes the play with these impressive words:—

"Vex not his ghost; oh, let him pass. He hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer."

In by-gone days the catastrophe was reversed, winding up with the happy marriage of *Edgar* and *Cordelia* (a mawkish interpolation), and the restoration of *Lear*, who was made to rejoice in his recovered authority. There were not wanting many who hailed the change as an improvement, and more who received it as genuine Shakespeare. The present age has been brought to a truer taste and a more just appreciation of the matchless bard; and not to all his predecessors combined are they so much indebted for the reform as to Mr. Charles Kean.

The part of *Lear* includes all the higher elements of tragedy under their most terrible attributes. It could

only be undertaken, with the hope of a prosperous issue, by an actor who ranks in the very first class, and combines an extraordinary union of mental and physical qualifications. It has been said often by professed critics, that "*Lear*" is a play that cannot be acted. We incline, on the contrary, to think that it is essentially an acting play; but its success or failure must entirely depend on the strength with which the leading character is delineated. The scenic appliances, the mechanicism of the storm, beautifully and picturesquely as they were employed in the present revival, would fade into nothing, unless the representative of *Lear* proved himself an Atlas, capable of bearing the entire weight of the tragedy on his own shoulders. The poet has given him a task far beyond ordinary reach, and measured by his own gigantic standard. Mr. C. Kean did wisely to abstain from grappling with *Lear* until his judgment was ripened by long experience, and his powers mellowed to their full maturity. This is one of the parts that has been said, for several generations, to have died with its immediate representative. When an actor of eminence retires from the scene, it is usual to predict that, in certain characters, he will have no successor. At the funeral of Garrick, a devoted partisan, with more zeal than wisdom, suggested that the play of "*Hamlet*" should be buried in his grave. Yet shortly after there came Henderson, and close on his footsteps, John Kemble, who inherited the laurels of the deceased Roscius in that very part, while yet his memory was green. When Cooke died, in 1812, it was loudly proclaimed that *Shylock* and *Richard* had expired with him. But within two years up sprang Edmund Kean, who excelled him in both. He, too, has departed, and the proud dynasty of the Kembles is theatrically extinct; but in their places we have Charles Kean, the

worthy son of an illustrious sire, who has placed his reputation as an actor of Shakespeare far above living competition, and has established his fame on an enduring basis, beyond all danger of subversion.

Mr. C. Kean's appearance in *Lear* was considered a challenge to criticism, which was freely accepted. He had every reason to be satisfied with the sentence pronounced by the enthusiastic public, and the more cautious exponents who lead or reflect public opinion. The general verdict was that he had equalled his *Hamlet* and *Louis the Eleventh*. It would be difficult to bestow higher praise. The performance was, in truth, a magnificent impersonation; not great by fits and starts, or marked by detached points, as was the case with his father's, but a splendid and harmonious whole, combining the result of long experience with the quick, comprehensive genius, which not only seizes on the prominent features of a portrait, but can also find a charm, a grace, and an expressive meaning, in what may appear to a less subtle apprehension but as inferior and uncharacteristic lineaments. Mr. C. Kean's manner, gait, and costume, were all in perfect keeping, and indicated the most careful study. There was a tremulous cadence in his voice, with an occasional break, under progressive excitement, which conveyed most naturally the impression of old age without the feebleness of decay. When the tide of feeling swelled into an overwhelming torrent, it poured from him without any exhibition of artistic prelude. He had not pronounced half-a-dozen speeches before it was clearly manifest to the audience that he had mastered the full range of the character, the sensibility of temperament, the hasty, extravagant passion, the blind, capricious impulsiveness, so readily goaded to insanity, under excessive injury and insult. It is difficult to imagine the effect with

which, at the close of the first act, he uttered the celebrated curse on *Goneril*. To feel this truly, the actor must be followed through every preceding alteration of feeling, all of which converge to one point, and lead up to the climax. Mr. Kean's attitude and expression, when he flung down his hunting spear, and fell on his knees before he spoke, presented a picture worthy of the pencil of a Raphael. There is nothing in written language, ancient or modern, to compete with this tremendous imprecation. Lovers of Greek lore challenge equality for the malediction on his sons, in the "Oedipus Coloneus of Sophocles." * French critics claim even superiority for the tempest of reproach with which *Camille* assails her victorious brother in "Les Horaces" of Corneille. In our humble opinion, both wither into nothing when placed in direct comparison with Shakespeare.

Through the second act, the whirlwind of passion is kept up by Mr. Kean with increasing intensity, as successive indignities and new acts of ingratitude are heaped upon him at the hands of his second daughter, *Regan*. He rushes distractedly into the storm, and here his reason begins to wander. The gradual advance to the confirmed madness of the fourth act was finely discriminated; but if we are to name a particular passage for superior praise, where all was uniformly excellent, we must select the opening scene of the fifth act, in which *Lear* recovers his intellects, and recognizes his daughter *Cordelia*. It was so natural and touching, that it excited the tears and plaudits of the house in equal proportions. After that, the aged sufferer has little to do but to expire of grief and worn-out nature,

* By an oblivious inconsistency, the deniers of Shakespeare's original genius and learning affirmed that he borrowed the idea of this passage from Sophocles.

with the murdered *Cordelia* in his arms. A more perfect picture than this sad group, or one that more impressively embodies the substance of a "tragic volume," was never exhibited upon the stage.

The manager was well supported by his actors, who all appeared to have caught the true Shakespearean spirit. The *Fool*, one of the great poet's most delightful conceptions in that class, could not have been entrusted to a more pleasing representative than Miss Poole. Her scraps of old songs were artless and affecting, and softened down with exquisite relief the agonising passion of the scenes in which they are introduced. The old masters omitted the *Fool*. Garrick feared the buffooneries of Woodward, to whom he thought of assigning it, and abandoned the idea. John Kemble and Edmund Kean found no *Fool* in Tate's version, and were content to lose him. Macready was the first who restored the character. Nothing was ever more dramatically effective than the contrast produced by the simplicity of this poor natural, the simulated frenzy of *Mad Tom*, and the gradual insanity of *Lear*.

Mr. Ryder's *Edgar* was a manly and effective performance. One of the weekly papers called it, "a fine sketch of Hanwell before the Conquest." Mr. Walter Lacy was a showy *Edmund*, and Mr. Cooper portrayed with chastened experience, the rough loyalty of *Kent*. Miss Kate Terry made an interesting *Cordelia*, and her two unamiable sisters, *Goneril* and *Regan*, were represented with imposing beauty by Miss Heath and Miss Bufton.

On Thursday, the 10th of June, 1858, after thirty-two consecutive repetitions, "King Lear" was withdrawn to make room for the "Merchant of Venice." Her Majesty and the Prince Consort were present on the concluding night, it being the fourth visit of the

royal family to this noble tragedy. Why is it that "Lear," while exciting unbounded admiration, is less universally followed than other plays of inferior mark? Because, though surprising, it is unsatisfactory, and leaves an impression of pain on the spectator's mind that all the power of the poet's genius and the actor's art cannot alleviate. There is no female interest sufficient to soften the prevailing gloom. *Cordelia* is a beautiful sketch, but she is seldom seen. *Goneril* and *Regan* are unqualified fiends, more wicked and repulsive than even *Lady Macbeth*. The latter has commanding energy in her crimes, and is at least faithful to her husband, with one touch of feeling in reference to his father.

The London papers of the first week of June, 1858, contained the following announcement, which was read with much regret by all who knew the subject of it privately, or remembered her in her professional eminence:—"On Sunday, May 30th, died at Brompton, Maria Rebecca Davison, formerly Miss Duncan, of the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket, aged seventy-eight, relict of the late James Davison, Esq. whom she survived ten weeks." Maria Duncan was the successor of Miss Farren, and for many years maintained her position as the first high comedy actress of the London stage. The original *Juliana*, in the "Honeymoon," and the best *Lady Teazle*, *Lady Townly*, *Beatrice*, *Romp*, *Rosina*, and *Marian Ramsey*, of her day. As a singer of Scotch ballads she was univalled. Her parents belonged to the theatrical profession, and it might almost be said she was born upon the stage. At five years of age, she acted the *Duke of York*, at Liverpool, to the *Richard the Third* of G. F. Cooke, and was highly complimented by the great eccentric star,—an unusual event, for he took little delight in infantine precocity. His contempt for the young

Roscus was expressed in unmeasured diatribes; but then he writhed under the degradation of stooping to *Glenalvon*, while the boy towered above him in the interesting character of *Norval*. Miss Duncan, at thirteen, played *Rosetta*, in "Love in a Village," at Dublin, and soon became an established favourite in the Irish metropolis. Miss Farren saw her there as a mere child, and predicted her future success. But she had still to wait her time and opportunity. Seven years after Miss Farren had left the stage and become Countess of Derby, Mr. Wroughton, at that period stage manager of Drury Lane, happened accidentally to see Miss Duncan perform the *Widow Cheerly* (Soldier's Daughter), at Margate, and offered her at once a liberal engagement for the ensuing season. On the 8th of October, 1804, she appeared as *Lady Teazle*, the same character in which Miss Farren had retired. On that evening, Mathews and Elliston also performed, for the first time, *Sir Peter Teazle* and *Charles Surface*. Elliston had only commenced his career at Drury Lane a fortnight before, as *Rolla*, and was then looked upon as the rising actor of the day. The "School for Scandal" was repeated fifteen times. Miss Duncan followed *Lady Teazle* by *Rosalind*, *Violante*, *Lady Townly*, and *Maria* in the "Citizen;" but Mrs. Jordan was also in the company, and her presence somewhat restricted the opportunities of the new comer. On the 31st of January, 1805, in the same season, Tobin's posthumous comedy of the "Honeymoon" was produced, and ran for twenty-eight nights. The *Duchess* afforded Miss Duncan the most desirable of all chances in theatrical life, a fine original character, of which she amply availed herself. Her performance in this part has never been approached by any succeeding actress. Her song at the commencement of the fifth act, produced an unfailing *encore*; her style of dancing, graceful yet unaffected, and

so agreeably contrasting the movements of the lady with those of the rustics with whom for the moment she was associated, proved one of the most attractive features in the comedy. In this, she was admirably seconded by Elliston, who danced with such elegance, that excellent light comedians afterwards were deterred from venturing on the *Duke Aranza*, because they lacked that accomplishment. Egerton, a heavy actor, selected it for his first London essay, and very nearly failed from his having neglected to worship the muse Terpsichore. Miss Duncan married Mr. Davison on the 31st of October, 1812. Ladies on the stage are apt to consider themselves more attractive under their maiden appellations, and often continue to retain them after they have become matrons. Miss Duncan had no such weakness. "An old Actress," who has written several amusing "recollections" in the *Era* (the faithful record of theatrical doings), says of her departed friend:—"Her change of situation was kept a secret, and her marriage surprised every one. She was debating with me how she should be announced. We laughed at the expense of poor Mrs. G., whose husband, on account of false pride, would not suffer her real name to appear, and she was, therefore, announced as *the late Miss Betterton*. 'No, I will not,' said Maria, 'be *the late Miss Duncan*, lest my friends, on seeing me act, should consider me but the *ghost* of my former self.'" The same pen adds, "She remained on the stage for many years after, nor quitted it until declining into the 'vale of years.' The last time I saw her on the boards was at the Haymarket (in 1825), in a piece called 'Tribulation.' In one scene she and Dowton displayed some fine acting. 'Ah!' exclaimed Bannister, who was of our party, 'we old ones did know how to do it!' and he loudly applauded these kindred spirits."

On Wednesday, June the 2d, 1858, the last performance took place at the "little Adelphi," the doors of which were then closed, never again to open on the same edifice. One of the smallest and most incommodious of London theatres, it had long enjoyed a peculiar reputation. The Adelphi had its own audience, its own authors, actors, and pieces. In all these there was an uninterrupted family inheritance, never disputed, but duly descending from generation to generation. How many names of celebrity are conjured up to memory, when we glance hastily back on the fifty-three years' life of this celebrated histrionic temple, devoted to red-hot melodrama, burlesque, domestic tales of intense interest, and "screaming farce." In its earliest epoch of celebrity it was called the Sans Pareil, managed by "true-blue Scott," as he was designated in popular phrase, with his daughter as the presiding goddess. Then succeeded Rodwell and Jones, under whom the "Tom and Jerry" mania reflected the taste of the day, and the freaks of "men on town" when George IV. was king. There was much wrenching of knockers and flooring of "Charlies" during this reign of slang and the back slums; but it helped to break up begging as a profitable investment, and certainly killed poor Billy Waters. After Rodwell and Jones came Terry, Mathews, and Yates, whose reign abounds in reminiscences of Buckstone and Fitzball: of T. P. Cooke, O. Smith, Wilkinson, and Tyrone Power; of Wright and Paul Bedford; of Mrs. Yates, and Mrs. Keeley; of "The Pilot," "The Flying Dutchman," "The Wreck Ashore," "Victorine," "Rory O'More," and, though last not least, of "Jack Sheppard," which has since been interdicted on the ground of its demoralizing example. In 1844, Mr. Webster became proprietor of the Adelphi, and appointed Madame Celeste as his

directress. "Then," says a notice in the *Times*, "the same author who had maintained the dramatic character of the theatre during the 'Mathews and Yates' period, came forward with his 'Green Bushes,' which may fairly be pronounced a perfect monster of success; inasmuch as fourteen years of scarcely interrupted wear and tear have proved insufficient to destroy its popularity. Many pieces have been brought out with various degrees of success since first *Miami* crossed the bridge, with her rifle on her shoulder, and *Muster Greenidge* and *Jack Gong* convulsed London with their eccentricities; but nevertheless, Mr. Buckstone's "Green Bushes" will always remain in the memory of the present generation of playgoers as the type of the old Adelphi. Nay, if in September next, Mr. B. Webster, according to announcement, opens a new Adelphi to the patronage of the public, a performance of this unfading piece will be regarded as a very legitimate house warming." The new Adelphi was not opened by Mr. Webster until the 26th of December, 1858, and is now one of the most elegant and commodious theatres in London.

There has been much disquisition and some severe homilies on the pernicious tendency of dramas of the "Tom and Jerry" and "Jack Sheppard" school. It cannot be said that they elevate the character of the stage; neither, perhaps, would it be easy to prove that they have permanently injured the morals of the public. They have died with the tastes and habits that inspired them, and may they long rest in peace. Their time-honoured prototype, the "Beggars' Opera," is now seldom brought forward. The stage would lose nothing if it were finally buried and forgotten. Modern taste has no perception of the poignant satire which gave force to it when first written, and which has ceased to be

understood or enjoyed with the times and individuals that have passed away.

On Saturday, June the 12th, the "Merchant of Venice," was revived: Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean taking their annual benefit on that evening. Actors and actresses of the highest rank have won clustering laurels as the representatives of *Shylock* and *Portia*. Macklin, Henderson, Cooke, and Edmund Kean have been indetified by past generations with "the Jew that Shakespeare drew." Mrs. Siddons first presented herself before a London audience as the accomplished heiress of Belmont, and frequently assumed the part in her riper years. In those days, and down to the present date, the "Merchant of Venice" was treated as a quiet, domestic drama, with some exquisite passages of poetry, and a scene or two of exciting passion; but it was never dreamed of as a vehicle for the most attractive and faithful pictorial embellishment, or as a medium for historical illustration equally delightful and instructive.

It would be impossible to produce a stronger contrast than that furnished by the present subject when considered with reference to its immediate predecessor. Lear is all wild, romantic, rudely magnificent, painful in progress and catrastrophe; it touches the extreme verge of tragic pathos and almost extends to the horrible. The "Merchant of Venice," on the other hand, presents a continued series of softened and delicious pictures; not all light, it is true, for then the surrounding glare would be intolerable, but with enough of shade and contrast to heighten while it relieves the prevailing brilliancy. The historical importance of Venice has passed away for ever; her palaces are crumbling, her gondolas glide silently through the canals unenlivened by song; the haunt of merchants is

no longer on the Rialto;—but the immortal verse of Shakespeare has invested the fair city of the sea with a charm for Englishmen which cannot perish with passing events, but which lives and blooms despite of political or national changes.

“ For unto us she hath a spell beyond
 Her name in story, and her long array
 Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond
 Above the dogeless city's vanish'd sway ;
 Ours is a trophy which will not decay
 With the Rialto ; Shylock and the Moor,
 And Pierre, cannot be swept or worn away—
 The keystones of the arch ! though all were o'er,
 For us re-peopled were the solitary shore.”

The “ Merchant of Venice ” has suffered less at the hands of mutilators than many of Shakespeare's equally popular dramas. Until Macklin restored the true version in 1741, a miserable imitation by Lord Lansdowne, called the “ Jew of Venice,” (in 1701) had superseded it as an acting play. In this, *Shylock* was buffooned into a low comic character, performed by *Dogget*, grotesquely habited and vulgarized. It required sometime before the public could be reconciled to the change. As in the case of the Gravedigger's innumerable waistcoats in *Hamlet*, the galleries were unwilling to give up their traditional laugh. From the days of Macklin until Mr. C. Kean's revival, no one meddled with the text, and arrangement of the play, as the contemporary of Quin and Garrick had settled it. Macklin was a fine actor, in a very limited range, and an author of some literary pretensions—witness his comedy of the “ Man of the World,” and the farce of “ Love à la Mode.” But he was neither archæologist, nor painter, nor poet, nor an enthusiast for historical accuracy ; and if he had been either or all of all these,

the age in which he lived could not have understood him. We have often felt surprised that Garrick never attempted *Shylock*. He would have done wonders in the part, with his fiery eye, his animated features, and his flexible voice. Perhaps he was deterred by the previous fame of Macklin, and unwilling to break a lance with so formidable a competitor.

Let us now consider what the taste and study of Mr. Kean have called into life from rich but hitherto neglected materials. The curtain draws up and we discover ourselves in Venice, the famed Queen of the Adriatic, "throned on her hundred Isles." Not represented as of old, by the traditionary pair of flats of Gothic aspect, symbolical alike of every age or country since the style was invented; but we see the actual square of St. Mark with the campanile and clock-tower, the cathedral, and the three standards, painted from drawings taken on the spot; restored, as in 1600, when Shakespeare wrote the play, and the incidents he has so skilfully interwoven are supposed to take place. Throngs of picturesquely-contrasted occupants gradually fill the area, passing and re-passing in their ordinary avocations. Nobles, citizens, inquisitors, foreigners, traders, water-carriers, and flower-girls are there; a flourish of trumpets announces the approach of the Doge, who issues in state procession, on his way to some public ceremony. The arrangement of the scene acts as an introductory prologue, and tells a story of identity which at once transplants us to the spot we are supposed to look on, and recalls the era designated. *Antonio* and his companions, who open the play, come forward naturally from the surrounding groups, and commence the dialogue and acting. In all there was truthfulness and novelty; a richness of conception and a union of poetry, never before attempted or imagined,

which, from the first moment, thoroughly engaged the attention of the audience.

The scene now shifts to the country residence of *Portia*, at Belmont, in which the saloon of the caskets presents a gorgeous picture of mediæval architecture and domestic luxury. *Shylock* is then introduced in the square of the Rialto, the exchange of Venice. Here was the real resort of merchants, and not the bridge, as some have erroneously supposed. The second act embraces a general view of Venice, taken from one of its most picturesque points, containing the canals, bridges, and gondolas, with all the peculiar localities and distinctive palaces that mark this strange city as a gem without a parallel. Here the abduction of *Jessica* takes place, in the midst of the frolic and bustle of a masquerade, as indicated by the words of the text. There have been many beautiful exhibitions of dancing and merriment in the Princess's Theatre, characteristic of various ages and countries; but none that in general estimation has equalled this. A Venetian carnival is a thing of itself, as distinct from any other street revel, from a *bal masqué* in the Opera House at Paris, from a country festival, or from an assembly in a private drawing-room, as can possibly be imagined. The great wonder is how, in so small a space, such an appearance of vast extent could be conveyed, and how so many groups, and such complicated movements, could be so gracefully organized.

The third act takes us again to Belmont, where *Bassanio* wins his lovely prize. In this portion of the play, too, we have the Rialto Bridge in its proper place, and no longer doing duty as the sole memorial by which Venice has, until now, been dramatically familiarized to us. The celebrated trial scene of the fourth act, where the poet puts forth all his strength, and the

interest of the play is so finely worked up, takes place in the "Sala dei Pregadi," or Hall of the Senators, one of the most remarkable rooms in the seignorial palace. The architecture and ornaments are punctiliously preserved. The costumes are taken from indisputable authority; but the stage arrangement is exclusively novel, and emanates entirely from Mr. Kean's profound knowledge of his art and managerial skill. He has utterly disregarded all conventional precedent, and, confiding in his own genius, has succeeded in embodying the most impressive court of justice that has ever been subjected to the criticism of a theatrical audience. We may readily imagine the amount of mind and physical exertion which must have been brought to bear to arrive at this perfect result. It is not alone by the acting of the principal characters, or by the superior intelligence of leading agents, that the harmonizing effect is produced. The dumb magnificoes, the subordinate officers, the clerks, heralds, and secretaries, the spectators crowded in the galleries and door-ways, all demonstrate the same interest in the gradual progress of the proceedings, and produce a succession of pictures in which nothing is out of keeping, but which satisfy the eye and critical judgment of the most fastidious artist, while they positively enchain the faculties of the general mass of beholders. The verse of Shakespeare tells with tenfold power when aided and expounded by these hitherto neglected accessories.

The chief interest of the "Merchant of Venice" undoubtedly ends with the defeat of *Shylock* and the rescue of *Antonio*. For this reason some sapient commentators, who persuade themselves that they could dictate improvements to Shakespeare, have denounced the last act as trifling and unnecessary. A few words

of explanation, they say, at the close of the trial, would have sufficed to discover *Portia* and *Nerissa* to their husbands; and then the curtain should have dropped. Garrick was persuaded by reasoning similar to this, when he curtailed "Hamlet" of the two last acts, and wound up with the play scene. But, happily, the judgment of posterity has vindicated the original intention of the author. Nothing, to our taste, can be more natural and pleasing than the return to Belmont, in the play we are now noticing, and the mode in which the final explanation takes place. If the objectors could have witnessed the repose and harmony of the moonlight garden, provided by Mr. Grieve, and the lively grace of Mrs. Kean, in the equivoque included in the speeches of *Portia*, they would have felt, even if they wanted the grace to confess, that the great poet was a truer interpreter of his own mind, and a more consummate master in dramatic science, than they, with their mistaken crotchets.

In his veneration for the pure text of Shakespeare, Mr. Kean has been careful to avoid substituting an expression or a line not emanating from the original source. He has, of necessity, expunged a few coarse passages, which illustrate nothing beyond the colloquial style and manners of an epoch less refined than the present. This comes under the head of purification, not omission, and takes nothing from strength, while it vindicates delicacy. The scenes of courtship by the *Princes of Arragon* and *Morocco*, had for many years been excluded from the acting play; why, it is too late as well as needless, to inquire; but their restoration is an important feature, which heightens the interest attached to the episode of the caskets. They are material also to the complete development of the position, character, and feelings of *Portia*. Mr. Kean well knows the value of music and dancing, when those

charming auxiliaries can be employed without violating consistency. The serenade under *Jessica's* window; the song, "Tell me, where is fancy bred?" while *Bassanio* is commenting silently before the caskets on which his fate depends; and the madrigal in the last act, in *Portia's* pleasure-grounds, are as appropriately introduced as they were pleasingly executed. The night carnival which terminates the second act equals the celebrated "Dionysia" in the "Winter's Tale," but in a totally different style; and is, in fact, such a passage from real life as could only be witnessed in Venice, or on the boards of the Princess's Theatre. What is there wanting in the "Merchant of Venice," as represented by Mr. Kean, that genius can conceive, art combine, or unlimited expenditure, regulated by elegant taste, accomplish? We have a play most ingeniously constructed, exquisite poetry, and vigorous delineation of character, which no mind but Shakespeare's could have moulded together; combined with acting of the most masterly description, heightened by all that painting, grouping, dressing, and stage arrangement can supply to complete a succession of pictures, harmonious in the general blending, and graphically distinct in each separate division. If any mortal appetite is not satisfied with this, and still requires more, the daughter of the horse-leech must cease to be quoted as a type of inordinate expectation.

Portia is one of the most fascinating of Shakespeare's female portraits. With a wise head on young shoulders, we love while we admire her, and envy *Bassanio* the certainty of his coming happiness. When we regard the feminine grace, purity, delicacy, and depth of feeling with which Shakespeare has so lavishly embellished his heroines; and when we remember, too, that in the days of dramatic infancy under which he wrote, his *Violas*,

Rosalinds, Juliets, Desdemonas, and Ophelias, were personated by boys or bearded men,* it would be worth the "jewel of Giamschid" or the Koh-i-noor to see him restored in the flesh for a single evening, to witness Mrs. C. Kean's delightful *Portia*. Our stage experience carries us a long way back, more years than there is any occasion to specify; but we remember no one who can be placed in comparison with her, taking into account all the varied qualities of this noble, and, at the same time, gentle and affectionate example of woman in her most attractive attributes. Comic actresses of celebrity have given infinite effect to the lighter passages, but have failed entirely in the great touchstone of the play — the trial scene. Under Garrick's reign, Mrs. Clive, unrivalled in her line as a chambermaid, a termagant, or a hoyden, was long permitted to burlesque *Portia*, for which she was utterly unsuited. When personating the doctor of laws, she gave imitations of the leading barristers of the day. Garrick felt the absurdity, but he lived under awe of her sarcastic wit, and dared not dispossess her of a part she held by prescriptive right and the favour of the public. On the other hand, some melancholy daughters of Melpomene, with smile as mournful as their sighs, in depicting faithfully the graver features of *Portia*, have lost sight of the unaffected ease and gaiety, the high tone of natural elegance, the inherent light-heartedness, with which the poet has gifted this charming creature of his fancy. We know not in which her present representative displays the greatest excellence. In the garb and demeanour of the advocate, she was forensic wis-

* We all remember the anecdote of the apology made to Charles II., who began to be impatient of delay, that the play could not begin until the Queen was shaved.

dom personified. In her own palace, and in her natural habiliments, she looked and moved the princess, inspiring affection, while she commanded respect and obedience.

Shylock stands alone in the dramatic repertory. The part is short, and concentrated into three scenes, unlike any other from the same hand; intense, but not varied. He stands in complete isolation on the Shakespearean canvas. We never find him, or even a shadow of him, again. The passions of hatred and revenge, national and sectarian, in their strongest development, form the very essence of his nature. These are common enough in humanity; but, as the great master of the human heart has here depicted them, they assume a harrowing individuality which belongs to the one terrible exception. It is so with Mr. C. Kean's embodiment of the character. We cannot trace in it the slightest resemblance to any of the other great parts with which his name has become identified. There is not a sentence, an action, or a glance, suggestive of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Wolsey*, or *Louis the Eleventh*. By this faculty of abstract painting, this singleness of conception, when required, the actor proves, in the most convincing manner, his perfect sway over the art he practises, and his full intelligence of the author he undertakes to reflect. Weighed as dramatic metal, *Shylock* is all pure gold, without dross. He has no superfluous scenes, no supplemental speeches, no diluted eloquence. He utters no syllable without a pungent meaning, and has a sarcasm in every sentence. Perpetual vituperation of his creed, his nation, and his calling, has moulded him into a concentrated retort, a sort of rolled-up porcupine, with his quills pointed in every direction. Some critics found fault with Mr. C. Kean for showing, as they said, too much feeling,—for

heightening the two or three passages that humanize this repulsive character. Why should he not? He has the text to guide him. Shakespeare has made *Shylock* express affection for the memory of his wife, and place confidence in his daughter. He entrusts her with his keys, and leaves her in charge of the house at night. He spits out venom, it is true, without measure; but always in reply, and never in attack. He is not malignant from nature, or without strong provocation.

The dramatic elements of *Shylock* are so clearly defined, that it would seem impossible for a man of talent to miss the intended effect; and yet although, with the exception of Garrick, all the leading actors of successive ages have grappled with him, few have achieved a complete victory. It was Henderson's trial part before a London audience in 1777, at the Haymarket. Macklin attended, and praised him as a debutant of promise. "I assure you, Sir," said the recruit, "that I never had the advantage of seeing you in this character." "I can readily believe that," replied the veteran; "if you had, you would have played very differently." Cooke, in 1800, almost effaced the memory of Henderson's *Shylock*. He was pronounced the legitimate successor of Macklin, until Edmund Kean rose like a meteor in 1814, and Cooke's warmest admirers acknowledged that he was beaten. Charles Kean has now stepped into the place vacated by his father, to complete the quintumvirate of great *Shylocks*, and satisfy the world that the modern stage has not degenerated. The Kembles—John, Stephen, and Charles—each in their turns donned the gaberdine of the Jew; but they would have done more wisely to have left it in the wardrobe. Young and Macready must be added to the list; but none of the

last named five added anything to their reputations, while perhaps they disturbed the spirit of Shakespeare by wilfully flying in the face of their peculiar attributes. Legions of daring novices have broken down hopelessly in the ambitious experiment. There is all that can be desired in Mr. C. Kean's style, in his figure, his eye, his features, his distinct elocution, his epigrammatic terseness, his impassioned delivery, and his quick, expressive action, to fit him for complete success in this most striking and original impersonation.

Mr. Kean received more complimentary letters on his performance than would fill a small volume. We select one in particular, from high classical authority :—

“ 11, Carlton House Terrace,
“ July 14th, 1858.

“ MY DEAR MR. KEAN,—

“ Allow me to thank you very particularly, in my wife's name and my own, for the treat which the ‘ Merchant of Venice ’ afforded us last night. I have found in each of your representations from Shakespeare, that the individuality you give to every play effectually obviates all risk of sameness, either in the characters, or what is more difficult, in the *mise en scène* ; and that no new effort you have made disappoints, even when subjected to the very severe test of comparison with its predecessors.

“ Let me also thank Mrs. Kean for her large share in our gratification last evening.

“ I am sorry that your very pressing employments have prevented us from meeting lately ; but I trust that in another season Mrs. W. Gladstone and I may be more fortunate.

“ Believe me very faithfully yours,

“ W. GLADSTONE.

“P.S.—I should have wished to bestow many compliments on your ‘King Lear’ in particular, did I not feel that my ignorance and inexperience would render it presumptuous.”

Miss Chapman, a niece of Mrs. Kean’s, made her first appearance on any stage as *Jessica*. She was evidently oppressed by the embarrassment of her position, and rendered even more timid by the kind reception with which she was welcomed. Her appearance was extremely prepossessing, her voice sweet, and her manner untainted by affectation, evidently betokening a familiar acquaintance with good society.

On the 28th of June, the “Merchant of Venice” was heralded in by a lively trifle of French parentage, from the indefatigable pen of Mr. J. M. Morton, under the name of “Dying for Love,”—a close translation of the original title, “*Aimer et Mourir*.” The English adapter contrived to heighten the very slender materials with his usual characteristic humour. This little piece ran with the “Merchant of Venice” to the close of the season.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH OF THE CELEBRATED FRENCH ACTRESS MADEMOISELLE RACHEL, AT LE CANNET NEAR MONTPELLIER—SHORT SUMMARY OF HER THEATRICAL CAREER—HER ENORMOUS PROFITS IN A FEW YEARS—HER WILL, AND FUNERAL OBSEQUIES.

ON the night of Sunday, the 4th of July, 1858, Mademoiselle Rachel, the pride of the French stage, and one of the greatest tragic actresses of any country, died at Le Cannet, in the south of France, after a lingering and painful illness. Her repeated engagements in London associate her name in some degree with the English drama, and her world-wide reputation entitles her to a passing word in the theatrical reminiscences of the time. Young in days, but mature in fame, she was removed from the scene of her earthly triumphs before she had completed her thirty-eighth year.

When Rachel returned from America in 1855, her health was so evidently broken, that her medical advisers at once pronounced her incapable of resuming the duties of her profession. She had caught cold by being too thinly attired at an evening party in New York, and the cold settled on her lungs. From that moment she never ceased to cough. The climate of Cairo was recommended as a last resource—a sentence almost as fatal as Madeira to the consumptive Englishman. To the banks of the Nile she accordingly repaired, in search of the anticipated amendment, which eluded her grasp; and after a fruitless sojourn she returned to

die in the south of France. Not long before her demise, she recalled to her medical attendants an incident of the period of her greatest success. She was playing *Phèdre*, and the Bey of Tunis critically said of her, at the end of the piece, "She has a soul of fire in a body of gauze." It was with a melancholy sigh she remarked to her doctor, "Alas! he was right; and now you see that the fire has destroyed the gauze."

Many of the living generation have seen and recollect Georges and Duchesnois. Rachel may be pronounced, on comparative evidence, superior to both. Her mien in the grand heroines of Greek and Roman tragedy was more severely classical. In feature, form, and attitude, in the arrangement of her drapery and the grace of her action, she presented the animated embodiment of a statue, fresh from the chisel of Chantrey or Canova.

Mademoiselle Rachel, or, more properly speaking, Elizabeth Rachel Felix (for such was her correct designation), was of Jewish descent and persuasion. She first saw the light on the 28th of February, 1821, in a miserable country inn at an obscure village called Munf, in the small canton of Arau, in Switzerland. Her father, a native of Metz, and her mother, whose maiden name was Esther Haya, followed the avocation of itinerant pedlars or hawkers, and for ten years after her birth were incessantly occupied in travelling through Switzerland and Germany. They encountered many privations in this peripatetic life, and struggled against a hard lot with fortitude and perseverance. Fired at last of wandering, they migrated with their family to Lyons, where Madame Felix set up a stall for the sale of her goods, and Monsieur Felix attempted to teach an imitation of German. But customers and scholars came in slowly. Sarah, their

eldest daughter, frequented the various coffee-houses, where she sang ballads, accompanied by herself on the guitar; while the little Rachel, her junior-assistant, went round the tables with a plate or a basket, to collect voluntary contributions.

In 1830, the family made their way to Paris, poor, straggling, and unknown, with no internal consciousness or presentiment of the brilliant future which fortune had in store for them. In the metropolis of France they eked out existence much after the fashion they had followed at Lyons. Rachel, now increased in stature, executed duets with her sister throughout the day at the doors of public places, and in the evening brought home the diurnal receipts to the family garret in the *Place de Grève*. These homely details have been denied by injudicious flatterers; but the subject of them, with superior good sense and independent spirit, frequently related the particulars herself.

During this epoch, Etienne Choron, founder of the Royal Institution of Religious Music, chanced to encounter the young vocalists. He was struck by their natural gifts, and proposed to them to join his class. Rachel, of the two, had made the greatest impression on him, and in a consequent visit to her parents, he pressed for her in preference to Sarah. She became his pupil, and he pledged himself to take care of her advancement. Her names were then condensed into *Elisa*, to please her master.

In a short time it was discovered that her magnificent organ of voice, metallic, sonorous, and flexible, was better adapted to produce startling effects in impassioned recitation, than in the more restricted field of scientific music. Whereupon Choron transferred his *protégée* to St. Aulaire, who trained up candidates for the stage at an establishment not connected with the *Conser-*

vatoire. Rachel, up to this period, had received scarcely any education, and read with difficulty. St. Aulaire bestowed on her four years of careful tuition, and taught her, word by word, the parts of *Hermione*, *Iphigenie*, and *Mary Stuart*. But the pupil was perpetually at variance with her instructor. By a strange misconception of her own capabilities, her bent inclined to the chambermaids, or light heroines of comedy—a mistake to which she long continued to cling, in spite of experience and proved inferiority.

In October, 1836, Rachel became a pupil of the *Conservatoire*, in the class of Michelot. She was then in her seventeenth year, and her parents were impatient to turn her talent to current account. The wolf was seldom absent from their door. Their poverty increased with their increasing numbers.

Not many months after Elisa had become a member of the *Conservatoire*, Poirson, manager of the Gymnase, happened to be present at a representation of Racine's "Iphigenia in Aulis," which took place in the Salle Chanteraine. The part of *Eriphile* was sustained on this occasion by the youthful Jewess. The character is not historical, but an interpolated creation of the author, of a very unamiable cast. It contains, nevertheless, dramatic force, with a good spice of vindictive passion. The veteran saw, admired, and yielded to the power of an inexperienced novice. Nature spoke in her earnest tones, while strong feeling flashed from her dark eye. Poirson's receipts had for some time been dwindling down on a regularly graduated scale. His money chest was threatened with consumption. The usual frequenters of his theatre yawned over milk and water vaudevilles, and went elsewhere in search of more tickling food. He determined to lure them back, if possible, before his declining treasury was symbolized

by an infinite decimal. A treaty was soon concluded with Monsieur Felix, for his daughter, on liberal terms, with an express stipulation that the common-place name of *Elisa* should be dropped for ever, and that of *Rachel* substituted in its place.

A new drama by Paul Duport, entitled "*La Vendéenne*," was ordered, written, and prepared for her first appearance. The press sounded the usual preliminary flourishes, the hour of trial arrived, the public crowded to the double novelty, but the result proved fatal to both. The piece and the debutante fell together. The part of *La Vendéenne* belonged to no defined class. It came within the range of comedy, was unsuited to Rachel's style, and afforded no scope for her peculiar attributes. The manager in disappointment and indignation withdrew the play from the bills, and reduced his recruit to the ranks. Her spirit nearly sank under this unlooked for disgrace. The prospect of delivering messages instead of personating heroines, appeared to crush for ever her aspiring hopes. It was in vain that she applied to Vedel (director of the Théâtre Français) for succour or advice. He left her letters unanswered and avoided all personal interviews. He was, in fact, a mere titular monarch without power or prerogative beyond the empty name. The associated members of the Théâtre Français acknowledge a sovereign, but rule as viceroys over him. The government is a sort of oligarchical republic with a nominal head, — a Doge of Venice controlled by the Council of Ten.

Michelot, Rachel's master at the *Conservatoire*, looking upon her prospects as entirely marred by this false step, ceased to take any further interest in her fate. In despair, she had recourse to Provost, a leading comedian of the Théâtre Français. He treated her pretensions with the most undisguised contempt, told her she

would never become an actress, advised her to renounce all idea of the stage, and to sell bouquets on the Boulevards. Discouraged again, but not utterly beaten, she now repaired to Samson, the living Molière of the French drama, equally renowned as author and actor. Here she was more fortunate. He heard her recite, and his attention was speedily rivetted. He expressed the most unbounded admiration at the extent and quality of her voice, and undertook to train her up in the line which nature so imperatively indicated that she should follow. Governed by his sound experience she renounced her favourite chamber-maids, and devoted her combined energies to the lofty range of tragedy. After a few months thus profitably employed, her clouded horizon began to brighten. Vedel became more accessible, and having patched up a truce with his refractory confederates, was allowed for a time to exercise his own discretion. He wisely suffered his judgment to be led by the decided opinion of Samson.

Not long after, the bills and advertisements announced Mademoiselle Rachel, at the Théâtre Français, as *Camille*, in the far-famed "Horaces" of Corneille. It was a daring hazard for a young girl, damped by previous failure, and who had only completed the first quarter of her nineteenth year. The turning point of her destiny had now arrived. The chances were heavily against her, and the time of year the most unfavourable that the chapter of accidents could have selected. It was approaching midsummer, the intense heat had rendered Paris a desert; all the world was at the sea-side or in the country. The streets could have been shelled from the heights of Belleville or Montmartre without much loss of anything but ammunition.

A thinly scattered, listless, and unexpectant audience assembled at the Français on the evening of that

eventful 12th of June, 1838. The stalls were deserted, and the voices of the actors reverberated back in hollow echoes from the thinly populated area of the pit and boxes. But in that small assemblage three individuals were included who could make or crush a reputation,—Dr. Veron, Merle, and Jules Janin; a triumvirate of critics, from whose sentences there was no appeal, and who governed theatrical opinion in Paris as despotically as the Emperor of all the Russias enthralled the minds and bodies of his sixty millions of serfs. It pleased them on this occasion to be enthusiastic in praise. Janin, in particular, indited an article in the *Débats*, which settled the question beyond cavil, and assured the success of the aspiring novice.

Within five months the new star was enabled to enumerate six distinct and successive triumphs in as many great and opposite characters. A seventh was yet wanting to the list, which Vedel persuaded her, with some misgiving, to undertake. Accordingly, on the 23d of November, 1838, she was announced for *Roxane*, in "Bajazet," an imperious virago, before whom *Lady Macbeth* and *Clytemnestra* sink into tameness;—another "adorable fury," as the French critics designate certain intemperate heroines of Corneille.

The associates of the company had already begun to boil over with jealousy, although their pockets were at the same time stuffed to unwonted repletion, as they shared in the managerial gains. But even money consoled them not for being partially eclipsed and placed on the shelf. Comedy, they exclaimed, was in danger of total extinction! and they were called upon, in the general interest, to make a stand before Rachel trampled them all under her feet. Several of the influential papers were induced to side with the malcontents. It was determined that *Roxane* should immolate Rachel.

As soon as she appeared in this new character on the appointed evening, she became suddenly conscious of the conspiracy, and felt that it was serious by the coldness of her reception, the frozen temperament of the pit, and the whispering of the boxes. On this night, every paltry but calculated artifice which an envious and unmanly clique could think of, was put in practice to disconcert the actress and enfeeble her wonted execution. For the moment they prevailed, and dragged down their intended victim far below the level of her usual standard. Even Jules Janin went over to the camp of the enemy, and published to the world in a laboured criticism that *Roxane* was a miserable failure. But, on the second performance, Rachel rose in her inherent strength despite all opposition, carried the unprejudiced portion of the audience with her in a whirlwind of applause, and, for once, the oracular dictum was disregarded as a malicious fallacy. At the third representation, the doors were crowded from an early hour; and, on the fourth, the receipts approached 300*l*. That evening she was nearly smothered under the storm of wreaths, coronets, and bouquets showered upon her from all parts of the house, as she re-appeared in obedience to an enthusiastic call, after the tragedy had concluded. On the following day she piled the trophies in a carriage, and drove to the residence of Provost. "Buy some of these," said she, "since you advised me to sell them." "Forgive a false prophet," replied the old comedian with ready gallantry, "and seal his pardon with a kiss."

Rachel had now firmly established her position. Conspiracy henceforward was treated with contempt, and she reigned without fear of rebellion or dethronement. The highest circles in Parisian society courted her acquaintance, and the most fashionable

Drawing-rooms received her as an honoured guest. In 1838, there existed in Paris a select coterie of a demi-religious character, divided between the spiritual and the voluptuous, of which Madame Recamier, a living Ninon de l'Enclos, the ci-devant Venus of the Directory and Consulate, was president, and Chateaubriand an influential member. There were bishops and archbishops amongst them, and an imposing array of literary celebrities, male and female. This entire conclave ardently desired to convert the gifted and popular daughter of Israel. It would have been a notable achievement to win over such an illustrious neophyte to the bosom of the Catholic Church. Rachel astutely humoured the aspirations of her zealous patrons, and to mystify them more completely fell into their suggestion of studying the part of the Christian convert, *Pauline*, in Corneille's "Polyeucte Martyr." This professional stratagem was crowned with signal success. She won their sympathies, commanded their support, received their lavish presents—and remained true to the faith of her fathers.

The extraordinary and enduring attraction of Rachel appeared to justify the demand of unprecedented payment. In England, the leading theatrical stars of the day make more, by country engagements in a few weeks than they can command in the metropolis throughout a long season. London gives them the stamp and reputation by which they are enabled to work the provinces as an unfailing mine. It is the same in France, when they can get the opportunities, which are not so readily afforded. Leave of absence from Paris is more difficult to obtain, and absence without leave is visited by heavy forfeitures which are rigidly exacted, including loss of present pay and future pension. It is construed, too, into an act of contempt against the sovereign public,

and would endanger the firmest of family ties. Esther, however, continued for some time to accept the most favorable leave of absence every year, and from 1841 onward the exercise of her talent produced something like 16,000 per annum. Such a sum was a small fortune at a length of time without a general distribution of wealth all that we know or have heard of in any other recent case, either at home or abroad, and recalls the recorded wonders of the gods employed by two or three great actors in ancient Rome.

There were other branches of the house of Heat who, now, as a natural consequence of Esther's success began to turn their thoughts to the stage, and determined to follow the line of her wealth. Her educated sister to such a store of wealth and fame. She as naturally responded to the call, and resolved to quartermen them in the theatre. She thought it morally, politically, and religiously right to take care of her own. From the opening chapter of the human history down to the last, whenever it may be supposed everybody has done, does, and will continue to do the same thing. Right or wrong, the principle is supported by universal practice. Richard, Felix, Sarah, Rebecca, and even the infant Dinah were successively enrolled in the company and borne in the treasurer's books—assuredly far more than they were worth. Richard could command engagements for her relations but she was unable to incline them with her genius. So, notwithstanding her man's devotedness to their shoulders with an exception, perhaps, in favour of Rebecca, who gave indications of promise, but died prematurely. The parents soon began to feel that they had rather too much of the family. Such a multiplying of Henry's dispositions appeared in the hills and valleys. Jewish proselytism presented itself on the boards that port no longer

said, "Let us go to the Théâtre Français," but "Let us look in at the Synagogue."

The Siddons of the French stage (like our own) always rose in the delineation of terrible, majestic, and overwhelming rage with greater effect than when simple tenderness or grief was to be depicted, without any mixture of the sterner passions. She astonished the mind more intensely than she touched the heart, and called forth vociferous plaudits in greater abundance than the silent homage of tears. Her undisputed supremacy was achieved in characters of which the prominent features are, hatred, contempt, irony, rage, or despair. Those who have seen her as *Camille* in "Les Horaces," can never forget the thrilling burst of agony with which she wound up the celebrated imprecation against Rome, in the fourth act, addressed to her brother, when he returns victorious from the combat, after having slain her lover and betrothed husband.

It being Rachel's ambition to include in her range all the recognised heroines of the classical French drama, she continued from year to year to go through the entire series. In all she was powerful and original, but *Phèdre* has been generally pronounced her masterpiece, as it had formerly been considered that of her precursor, Duchesnois. The writer of this notice has seen them both, and perfectly recollects the peculiar excellences of each. Nothing could be more opposite than their appearance and manner. Little similarity could be traced, except in the effect, which was produced with equal force by different means. In quality of voice, and skill in modulation, they were nearly on a par; but Rachel had immeasurably the advantage of personal appearance. In the *Phèdre* of Duchesnois you saw and felt a consummate actress, but in Rachel

you looked upon and acknowledged the veritable presence of the guilty wife of Theseus, the poetical creation of Euripides and Racine, devoured by a passion beyond control, and enthralled by a fatal destiny which renders resistance hopeless. Both Duchesnois and Rachel reflected nature through the perfection of art, but the art was more skilfully concealed by the latter and younger representative.

It has been repeatedly said by Rachel's detractors (and where is the genius that can escape detraction?) that her talent was confined to a facility of execution; that she could do nothing without being taught, and possessed within herself no creative or imaginative power. That, in short, she was a mere parrot, quick to catch an oral impression, or to remember a lesson, but utterly without mental resources, and incapable of teaching herself. In support of this conclusion her defective education has been set forward as a leading argument. According to this censorious clique, whenever Rachel undertook a new part, she fled to her preceptor and adviser, Samson, from whom she imbibed the inspiration which she could adopt and appropriate with felicitous dexterity; but which, in the absence of superior intellect, she wanted the faculty of originating. At the close of the most harrowing performance, said these determined oppositionists, when the spectators were bewildered with conflicting emotions, the hand of Rachel was cold, her pulse beat no quicker than usual, her features were composed, and she exhibited no symptom of exhaustion from mental or physical fatigue. In opposition to the well-known canon of Horace, she excited thousands to enthusiasm, without participating in the fever she had caused.

These are extreme opinions, which confute themselves. Admit that this great artist, in common with

many others, has had recourse to instruction, and received imparted ideas,—whence came the variety which those who have seen her often and studied her closely, cannot fail to have observed in her delineations of the same character on different occasions? If she merely repeated a lesson acquired by rote, repetition might mellow but could not alter the manner in which that lesson would be delivered. It was always impossible to pronounce judgment on Rachel from her first performance of any given part. On such trials she was often uncertain of her effects, and not until the third or fourth experiment, when she had become confident in the soundness of her conception, could she be said to have discovered or put forth her full strength.

When Rachel obtained her first leave from the Théâtre Français in 1840, her earliest provincial visit was to the great commercial city of Lyons. Here she produced a furor equal to that she had excited in Paris, and at the conclusion of her engagement, the enthusiastic functionaries of the corporation presented her with a coronet of massive gold, valued at 350 Napoleons. After a triumphal progress through many of the leading towns in France, in 1841 she repaired to London, and made her first appearance before an English audience at the Opera House in the Haymarket, then under the management of Laporte. Her attraction exceeded even the most sanguine expectations, and was crowned by the present of a magnificent ring from her majesty Queen Victoria, as a tribute to her professional excellence.

In the following year she came again to the same theatre, which had then passed into the hands of Mr. Lumley. Between 1846 and 1853, she fulfilled five successive engagements with Mr. Mitchell at the St. James's, during which the London public had oppor-

tunities of seeing her in nearly the entire range of her great characters. She brought many influential introductions, and at the outset, invitations poured upon her in abundance from fashionable and aristocratic circles; but after a season or two, although public admiration continued and increased, private attention received a check. During the summer of 1847, she appeared in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Negotiations were also at that time entered into with the Dublin manager; but 250*l.* per night, secured,—the sum proposed for herself and troupe—was considered too hazardous. If any one had then prophesied that within twelve months after, 1,500*l.* nightly would be averaged in the last-named city to five performances of Jenny Lind, at an unprecedented scale of prices, he would have been pronounced an incurable lunatic. Such is the unfathomable lottery of all theatrical speculation.

Notwithstanding the frozen climate of Russia, St. Petersburg has invariably given a warm reception to foreign talent in every branch of art. Rachel was received in the northern capital with enthusiasm surpassing that which had been lavished on the most attractive of her predecessors. She was applauded to the echo, fêted, adulated, and returned home laden with honours and riches, bending under the weight of roubles and diamonds. During her visit to Russia, the war broke out. Towards the conclusion of a grand dinner, to which she was invited as a parting compliment, some officers present, attached to the personal staff of the Czar Nicholas, indulged in vaunting anticipations of the approaching triumph of their master, and the certain humiliation of France and England. "To our speedy meeting again, Mademoiselle," exclaimed they, pledging the fair guest in bumpers; "we shall soon

applaud you in Paris, and drink your health in the delicious wines of France." "Gentlemen," replied Rachel, "I thank you for your good wishes, but France is not rich enough to treat her prisoners with champagne."

Austria and Italy proved scarcely less remunerative to the all-enchanting daughter of Melpomene. Having, for the moment, exhausted Europe, she determined to glean America. Enormous sums were offered, as a certainty, for two hundred performances in the United States; but Rachel rejected them, and farmed herself out, as she had done before, to her brother Raphael, who had now amassed capital enough to venture on a more gigantic experiment in the New World, and entirely on his own responsibility. He miscalculated, and paid dearly for his error. All the indigenous managers united in a dead set against the intruding foreigner. He would have done more wisely to have coalesced with Barnum, or some practised speculator "native, and to the manner born;" success, then, might have been extorted by dexterous puffing. As it was, the whole matter eventuated in a signal commercial failure: a result for which the heroine was totally unprepared.

Brother Jonathan bites rabidly at most of the baits that are held out to tempt him. Music, in any language, fascinates his reason and imagination; but he is no pupil of Aristotle, has no faith in the unities, and is slow to appreciate Gallic filtrations of Sophocles and Euripides.

Whether from chagrin at this single defeat, or through the rapid inroads of organic disease which undermined her health, Rachel's performances were not resumed on her return to Europe. It was at Charleston that she played for the last time, and her concluding part was that of *Adrienne Lecoureur*.

Despite the loss of time in America, and the un-

realized thousands she had calculated on. Rachel was generally reported to be *deux fois millionnaire*; a grandiloquent phrase, which translated into prosaic English, means that she had amassed one hundred thousand pounds sterling;—an almost incredible produce for less than fifteen years of labour. She bore the character of being parsimoniously inclined, except where her own relations were concerned. Towards these she ever practised the extreme of liberality. But her brothers and sisters in the profession, when engaged in her provincial tours, complained that she paid them scantily, and worked them to death. She herself was indefatigable, and has often been known to act six times in the week, travelling, on occasion, twenty leagues from place to place, and sleeping in her carriage.

This predominating love of money has been urged as an argument to show that she could not be endowed with the essential soul of genius. Avarice, according to those who reason thus, is incompatible with lofty intellect. It is a sordid, humiliating passion, as all-absorbing as it is base; which grovels on the earth in search of dross and vulgar treasure, while pure, ethereal mind looks up to heaven, and loses itself in dreams of immortality. All this sounds well in poetry, but fails in practical illustration. Meanness in some things does not, of necessity, preclude elevation in others. The glorious philosophy of Bacon stooped to the contaminating influence of corruption; and this lamentable weakness has associated his name with a couplet of Pope that will never die:—

“ If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin’d,
The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.”

Cassius was taunted by his intimate friend and brother with having “ an itching palm;” the great Duke of

Marlborough was known to be a worshipper of gold ; and David Garrick bowed before his ingots, as to the household deities of his hearth. Yet the first was nevertheless a staunch patriot, the second an invincible general, and the third a pre-eminent actor.

The great French actress never set herself up as an Aspasia in learning, or advanced pretensions to more education than she really possessed. Count Molé, complimenting her one day in a strain of exaggerated flattery, on her pure elocution, said, " Mademoiselle, you have saved the French language." " If so, it is by chance," replied she, " for I have never been taught it." When the revolution of 1848 burst suddenly forth, and Louis Philippe, by his own mismanagement, suffered himself to be kicked from the throne he ought never to have occupied, Rachel became a red-hot patriot, in common with the infuriated million of Paris. Night after night she appeared, at the conclusion of the play, in a mixed military and Roman costume, and pealed forth the Marseillaise Hymn, with glowing republicanism, waving in her right hand the national standard. The novelty and the prevailing sentiment of the hour drew crowds to the strange exhibition ; but when liberty and fraternity went down once more under the memorable *coup d'état* of December, 1851, Rachel veered round in her tactics, and subsided into a fervent Napoleonist. Talleyrand himself, who made and broke at least twenty oaths of allegiance, never trimmed his time-serving loyalty with more adroitness. And why should blame attach to either ? Dynastic and legislative changes in France may be considered as certain as the periodical returns of a comet, and much more speedy in rotation. No prudent citizen, therefore, should be condemned for swimming with a tide subject to so many variations. At the restoration of the Bourbons in

1814 and 1815, the old soldiers of the Empire were compelled to mount the white emblem of the family; but every man kept the tri-coloured cockade in his knapsack, waiting to depose the lily with a moment's notice, on the first cry of "Vive l'Empereur." "Ready, eye ready," is a good political motto, which admits of a wide application.

In the theatre Rachel practised hauteur and reserve towards her associates, and seldom entered the green-room. The ante-chamber of her dressing apartment, sumptuously furnished, constituted her hall of audience. There between the acts, or at the close of her performance, she received visitors in queenly state. Ministers and ambassadors were to be found amongst her crowd of worshippers. At home her exclusive study was to please.

Young, renowned, rich, handsome, with the world at her feet, she might have married when and whom she pleased; but she adored the fame pertaining to her art too earnestly to surrender it up to domestic privacy;—her spirit was too independent to endure the ties and fetters by which ordinary natures consent to be bound.

It was currently said that Rachel had embraced the Roman Catholic faith, and received the sacrament, a few days only before her death. This is contradicted by the fact that she was attended in her last moments by a Rabbi, and that her body being removed to Paris, was publicly buried in the compartment of the cemetery of Père la Chaise appropriated to her people, according to the rites of Judaism. Her will, it was also said, and the general disposition of her vast property, would be disputed by some who thought they had a more legitimate claim than the nominated legatees. When the coffin that contained her mortal remains was lowered into the earth, the Rabbi repeated aloud in Hebrew

the prayer called *Haskabe*, and then another in French. Funeral orations were delivered by MM. Jules Janin, Bataille, and Maquet. M. Janin expressed his regret that the deceased was not eulogised by the only man competent to do so, but at present in exile, namely, Victor Hugo. The grave was then filled up, and the vast attending crowd returned to their daily avocations.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DRAMATIC COLLEGE, OR ASYLUM FOR DECAYED ACTORS AND ACTRESSES—PUBLIC MEETING IN THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE, MR. C. KEAN IN THE CHAIR—REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS READ BY MR. CULLENFORD—SPEECHES BY MR. C. KEAN, MR. DICKENS, MR. CRESWICK, MR. T. P. COOKE, MR. HARLEY, MR. B. WEBSTER, MR. ROBERT BELL, SIR G. ARMYTAGE, MR. F. MATTHEWS, AND SIR W. DE BATHE—PUBLISHED REPORT FOR 1858, WITH AMOUNT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS—HER MAJESTY BECOMES PATRONESS—DIFFERENCE WITH MR. HENRY DODD, AND FINAL REJECTION OF HIS OFFER—DEATH OF JOHN PRITT HARLEY—SUMMARY OF HIS CAREER—CLOSE OF THE SEASON AT THE PRINCESS'S—MR. C. KEAN'S ADDRESS—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

ON Saturday, the 10th of July, 1858, a dramatic event occurred which it would be unpardonable not to record. Mr. Buckstone closed the Haymarket, after a season of little less than five years, and 1,427 acting nights. Throughout that long period, the theatre had remained open without interruption, except on Sundays, during the Passion Weeks, and on a few other occasional evenings prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain. The instance is without precedent, and will in all probability stand alone in future theatrical history.

In the course of the current year, a movement originated which had long been wanting to erase a reproach from the profession of the stage, that while every trade and calling had its asylum or house of refuge for destitute or disabled members, the actors alone formed an apparently careless or selfish exception. The spring, when once set in motion, accelerated in pace and strength with corresponding alacrity.

On Wednesday, the 21st of July, 1858, a public meeting was held at the Royal Princess's Theatre, CHARLES KEAN, Esq., F.S.A., in the chair, for the above-named purpose. The pit and gallery were thrown open to the public, and were crowded in every part; the boxes and stalls were occupied by those who had applied for tickets before the day of meeting; and the stage was fitted up for the use of the Provisional Committee and reporters for the press. A great number of ladies were present, and added much to the beauty of the scene by the deep interest they appeared to take in the proceedings.

On Mr. Kean's appearance on the stage, he received several rounds of applause; and when he proceeded to the performance of his duties as chairman of the meeting, those cheers were repeated. At a few minutes past one o'clock, he addressed the meeting as follows:—

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, —The object of this meeting is to awaken public attention to a subject of very great interest to the members of the theatrical profession, and, if possible, to excite your sympathies, and to enlist your co-operation, in providing an asylum for some of those who, having long administered to your amusement, seek rest and comfort in the evening of their lives, for the brief space allotted to them after years of toil and trouble, before the dark shadow descends upon the dial of life. (Applause.) A kind and benevolent gentleman, Mr. Henry Dodd, possessing landed property in Berkshire, has volunteered to give five freehold acres, for the purpose of building certain charitable houses for the reception of aged and worn-out brothers and sisters of the stage. In addition to the grant of land, I am permitted to state that this gentleman will also contribute one hundred guineas towards the erection of the

houses. (Applause.) Assuredly we must all feel that in this instance wealth has been bestowed on one who truly understands the value of the blessing which Heaven has vouchsafed to him—to do good to his fellow-creatures, to supply the wants of the indigent, and to open a refuge for the aged and destitute. Under these circumstances, it is a duty we owe to ourselves to strain every nerve to assist this noble undertaking; and I cannot but feel that, as a professional body, we should be highly culpable were we in any degree to neglect carrying out such a disinterested intention. I will not detain you any longer for the present, but will call upon Mr. Cullenford, our excellent and indefatigable secretary, to read the Report of the Provisional Committee, which will inform you of what has been done towards the establishment of this much-desired institution.” (Cheers.)

MR. CULLENFORD read the Report, detailing the preliminary arrangements that had taken place, the appointment of a Provisional Committee, and the general scheme of the proposed institution.

MR. KEAN then said: “Ladies and Gentlemen,—The proceedings of this meeting having thus far advanced, it becomes my duty to address a few words to you in behalf of the object we have in view. First, however, in the name of the Committee, allow me to thank you most sincerely for the honour you have conferred upon us by your presence here this day, and for the kind attention you have bestowed on the subject in question—a subject which, you are well aware, is of serious import to the profession of the stage, and one which, if successfully carried out, will be the means of comforting many who, having passed the summer of their lives in your service, have nothing to cheer them, save through your help, during the barren and desolate

winter which awaits the remnant of their days. (Applause.) It may appear strange that no charitable institution of the kind now proposed has as yet been erected for the reception of aged and worn-out members of the dramatic art. Almost every other occupation of life can point to some such asylum for their decayed and broken associates ; but for the actor there is no roof as yet prepared to shelter his white hairs—no home to receive his shattered frame—no haven of repose towards which he can direct his tottering steps. (Applause.) I would not for one moment presume to advance as a claim that which, I am sure, will spring from your own generous and benevolent impulses ; but perhaps I may be excused if, on such an occasion, as an actor myself, I derive some satisfaction in alluding to the obligations which England is under to actors. I do not refer to the long list of those distinguished performers whose great talents delighted your ancestors, and some of whose monuments now stand side by side with those of the most illustrious of our dead in the Abbey of Westminster ;—(hear, hear)—but I wish to remind you of two important national legacies that have been bequeathed by actors—the legacy of deed, and the legacy of mind. That noble institution for youth, and asylum for age, Dulwich College—(applause)—was erected and endowed by the sole and unaided charity of one of the most honourable and respected men that ever drew the breath of life—Edward Alleyne, the actor ;—(great applause)—and what pride must we, as a professional body, feel that the brightest literature of our country, the works of the most comprehensive mind that ever shed lustre on our history, have been left to us by an actor—William Shakespeare. (Cheers.) Were it not for the stage, that mighty genius could not have found vent for the inspirations of his wondrous powers. That man, whose name

is the pride of England—that marvel of the world, whose fame is the envy of the foreigner, while he bows in homage at his shrine—that man was an actor! (Applause.) The memory of these two celebrated persons alone should teach us all to reflect on the goodness and the greatness of which the stage is capable, and prompt the hearts of every English man and woman to encourage and cherish those who devote their lives to the development of an art which, when properly appreciated and properly protected, cannot fail to prove itself a source of national utility. (Loud applause.) Every human undertaking advances by progressive steps, and, in the words of our great poet,—

‘ We work by wit, and not by witchcraft,
And wit depends on dilatory time.’

“ We do not expect that this project is to spring up in a complete form as if by magic, like Aladdin’s palace; but what we ask this day is, that you will now sow the seed which hereafter may expand into a stately tree—that you will lay the foundation-stone upon which may rise a goodly edifice. Let us hope that this meeting is but the beginning of the end, and that most of us now present may be spared to witness the prosperous results of this infant scheme, which under your auspices will grow into vigorous manhood. (Cheers.) Ladies and Gentlemen, throughout the varying series of dramatic representations provided for your amusement, from the lofty inspirations of Shakespeare to the lighter effusions of mirthful fancy, you see the members of each establishment who are endeavouring to afford you recreation from the more serious duties and trials of life—who are engaged for the time being possibly in relieving your minds from care and anxiety—you see them in the apparent enjoyment of health and strength. The vital

spark burns strongly and brightly ; but ‘look upon this picture and on this!’ Witness them in years to come, when health is broken and strength prostrated—infirm and aged—ill and in want—helpless and afflicted—no rest, no comfort, no joy, as they close their earthly scene; and then let the small, still voice within whisper—‘To these I am indebted for years and years of service, in some instances perhaps for nearly half a century. They cry for help, and shall I deny them sympathy and assistance?’ (Prolonged applause.) No; in the true spirit of Christianity, you will do unto others as you would they should do unto you. (Applause.) Let it be remembered that in our country the actor has no reliance but on the public. His only hope is in the hearts of his audience. Unlike the continental nations of Europe, the theatre here receives no annual subsidy, no pecuniary allowance from the Crown, the Government, or the municipal authorities. The actor’s only recompense is your approval, his only pension your voluntary gift. (Hear, hear.) To the public he must look for support, and the British public never did and never will refuse to do that which is just and liberal in return for lives exhausted in their service. (Applause.) There are hundreds of us, who, through the mercy of Providence, may never need this aid; and yet who can foresee the changes and vicissitudes that await us? But we plead for our poorer brethren, for those less fortunate and less strong, who by your bounty may thus be enabled to look forward in old age to some prop on which they may lean with security, relieved from that mental disquietude which is ever engendered by the dread of privation and poverty. Through your help they will find a home for mind and body, where they may enjoy in peace the pleasing retrospect of former days, and prepare in tranquil resignation for the great

and solemn change that awaits us all. (Applause.) You will not, I am sure, allow your feelings to evaporate in useless sensibility, but you will stretch forth to them the open hand of charity. To those less endowed with means, I would say, do not hesitate because your gift be trifling; great or small, as the widow's mite was acceptable, so will be your contribution. (Hear, hear.) The act blesses the giver and the receiver. The hour will come when we shall have to account for those gifts which Providence has lent to us on earth. At that solemn moment may the recording angel open the page wherein is written that you have comforted and relieved the aged and the destitute; that you have rewarded to the best of your ability the servants who have toiled for you; that you have vindicated one of the divine qualities which adorn the human heart—the quality of charity. (Applause.) May you unanimously respond to this appeal, and set an example here this day, which will be followed by thousands, and which only requires the moving impulse to arrive at a full and happy completion. Let us all bear in mind the beautiful and touching words of the Psalmist, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy, the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble, and shall comfort him when he lieth sick upon his bed.' I will not further encroach upon your time and patience; I fear I have already too long detained you—('No, no,' and applause)—but I hope you will pardon the enthusiasm of one who feels deeply the cause he is endeavouring to plead. (Applause.) Before I resume my seat, allow me to state that, in addition to the benevolent donor's intentions, and the manner in which the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatrical funds are disposed to assist this undertaking—(great applause)—I have this morning received a letter from Mr. Buckstone, the treasurer of the General

Theatrical Fund, who is unavoidably detained in the country, to the effect that his fund is anxious to imitate the example of its elder sisters. If this arrangement, therefore, be carried out, we shall commence with three of the houses at once; and allow me to take the opportunity of saying, that it will afford me very sincere pleasure to hold myself responsible for the building of a fourth." (Cheers and waving of hats and handkerchiefs.)

Mr. CHARLES DICKENS: "Ladies and Gentlemen,—I think I may venture to congratulate you beforehand on the pleasant circumstance that the movers and seconders of the resolutions which will be submitted to you will probably have very little to say. Through the Report which you have heard read, and through the comprehensive address of the Chairman, the cause which brings us together has been so very clearly stated to you, that it can stand in need of very little, if of any, further exposition. But, as I have the honour to move the first resolution which this handsome gift, and the vigorous action that must be taken upon it, necessitate, I think I shall only give expression to what is uppermost in the general mind here, if I venture to remark that, many as the parts are in which Mr. Kean has distinguished himself on these boards, he has never appeared in one in which the large spirit of an artist, the feeling of a man, and the grace of a gentleman—[hear, hear]—have been more admirably blended than in his this day's faithful adherence to the calling of which he is a prosperous ornament, and in this day's manly advocacy of its cause. (Cheers.) Ladies and Gentlemen, the resolution entrusted to me is—

"That the Report of the Provisional Committee be adopted, and that this meeting joyfully accepts, and gratefully acknowledges, the gift of five acres of land referred to in the said Report."

“It is manifest, I take it, that we are all agreed upon this acceptance and acknowledgment, and that we all know very well that this generous gift can inspire but one sentiment in the breast of all lovers of the dramatic art. As it is far too often forgotten by those who are indebted to it for many a restorative flight out of this working-day world, that the silks, and velvets, and elegant costumes of its professors must be every night exchanged for the hideous coats and waistcoats of the present day, in which we have now the honour and the misfortune of appearing before you:—cheers and laughter)—so, when we do meet with a nature so considerably generous as this donor’s, and do find an interest in the real life and struggles of the people who have delighted it, so very spontaneous and so very liberal, we have nothing to do but to accept and to admire: we have no duty left but to ‘take the goods the gods provide us,’ and to make the best and the most of them. Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to remark, that in this mode of turning a good gift to the highest account, lies the truest gratitude. In reference to this, I could not but reflect, whilst Mr. Kean was speaking, that in an hour or two from this time the spot upon which we are now assembled will be transformed into the scene of a crafty and a cruel bond. (Immense cheering, which lasted for some time.) I knew that, a few hours hence, the grand canal of Venice will flow, with picturesque fidelity, on the very spot on which I now stand dry-shod, and that ‘the quality of mercy’ will be beautifully stated to the Venetian Council by a learned young doctor from Padua;—on these very boards on which we now enlarge upon the quality of charity and sympathy. Knowing this, it came into my mind to consider how different the real bond of to-day from the ideal bond of to-night. Now, all generosity, all forbearance, all for-

getfulness of little jealousies and unworthy divisions, all united action for the general good. Then, all selfishness, all malignity, all cruelty, all revenge, and all evil,—now all good. Then, a bond to be broken within the compass of a few,—three or four,—swiftly passing hours,—now, a bond to be valid and of good effect generations hence. (Great cheering.) Ladies and Gentlemen, of the execution and delivery of this bond, between this generous gentleman on the one hand, and the united members of a too often and too long disunited art upon the other, be you the witnesses. Do you attest of everything that is liberal and free in spirit, that it is ‘so nominated in the bond;’ and of everything that is grudging, self-seeking, unjust, or unfair, that it is by no sophistry ever to be found there. I beg to move the resolution which I have already had the pleasure of reading.” (Loud and continued cheering.)

The resolution, which MR. W. CRESWICK seconded, was carried unanimously.

MR. T. P. COOKE, seconded by MR. HARLEY, proposed:—

“That Charles Kean, Benjamin Webster, Charles Dickens, and W. M. Thackeray, Esqs., be elected Trustees of the said College.”

MR. BENJAMIN WEBSTER: “Previously, Ladies and Gentlemen, to proposing the third resolution, I am appointed to thank you for your approval of the four names submitted to you as trustees of this proposed—I think I may say carried—Institution; and to assure you that the endeavours of those trustees will be used to carry the object to its utmost extent. I wish that for your advantage one of those named who is absent from us, Mr. Thackeray, had been here to thank you instead

of myself, but circumstances have occurred which prevent his desired appearance here to-day. I know it will be your loss, and not my gain, for I lack the power of speech of that gifted gentleman. But I will yield in earnestness of purpose, and earnestness of hope for a brighter future for this profession, to no man, be he high or low. (Applause.) I feel it a great honour to hold the post of Trustee to this College, and so, I am sure, do my companions in that office. I thank you in their names, and in my own; and the more responsibility you give to that office by your liberality, the more you increase the honour you have conferred upon us. I have now to propose to you the third resolution, which is in these words:—

“That a subscription be entered into for the purpose of carrying out the gift of the donor and the intention of the Provisional Committee, and of forwarding the benevolent object for which we are assembled.”

“After the eloquent speeches which have been addressed to you, which so ably defined the end and object of our assembling here, a few words from me will suffice. I am egotistical enough to believe that many here know my humble efforts to obtain a few crumbs for the poor player from the very rich table of Dulwich College (‘Hear, hear,’ and cheers); but though all I prayed for was most cheerfully granted by the four parishes having the right to its benefit under Alleyne’s will, more was thought of building a church—though one existed there sufficient, as it was proved, for all the requirements of the parish—endowing it with 300*l.* a year out of the earnings of the profane stage-player, and placing it in the gift of the Archbishop of Canterbury, than conceding a paltry 100*l.* out of nearly a million and a quarter of wealth, to four worn-out actors and actresses, and educating eight of their children; and this, too, in the face

of the fact that Alleyne originally commenced the College for actors and their families. I trust that the result has given birth in some degree to this laudable donation. When I looked around upon the numerous colleges, institutions, and hospitals for young and old, specially devoted to certain trades and professions, I did feel that there was an exception to my class, but your presence here to-day proves such an exception to have been undeserved. (Loud cheers.) It has been the constant purpose of my life to see an institution similar to Dulwich College for the care-worn members of our much-neglected and much-abused profession, having practically known many of the trials and many of the vicissitudes and necessities of an actor's life. I may be allowed to state, Ladies and Gentlemen, that in my long experience as manager, actor, and a man of the world, I have known no class who, from the highest to the lowest employé in the establishment, give more bountifully to the unfortunate brother than the actor. Now if, indeed, charity be a cloak, let it cover the many errors that ignorance and fanaticism unjustly heap upon our calling. Thank Heaven, there are hundreds, thousands, nay millions, who do and will stand by us, even to the highest in the realm, as the following admirably written letter, in answer to a request that her Majesty would become our Patroness, will amply prove:—

“ ‘Oshorne, July 16th, 1858.

“ ‘MY DEAR MR. WEBSTER,—I have had the honour to lay before her Majesty the Queen the papers which accompanied your letter to me of the 15th inst. I have received the commands of her Majesty to say to you in reply, that her Majesty would take much interest in any plan for rendering more comfortable the declining years of actresses and actors who are suffering under insufficient

means (great applause) ; and the Queen would wish every success to the undertaking of which you have forwarded the prospectus. The scheme is not, however, as yet sufficiently advanced for her Majesty to become its Patroness. The Queen has always required, before she grants the use of her name to any new charity, that not only shall the object be a deserving one, but that it shall have been sufficiently appreciated and supported by the public to give a reasonable security that the institution shall be prosperous and permanent. When, therefore, your plans have acquired a little more substantive character, and there is good evidence of a cordial and general support, you will be at liberty to apply to me again for her Majesty's patronage.—Sincerely yours,

“ ‘ C. B. PHIPPS.

“ ‘ B. Webster, Esq.’ (Cheers.)

“Ladies and Gentlemen, that is the highest honour that could be conferred upon us ; and so deeply am I interested in this cause, that without any attempt at ostentation, I will give, from large masses of stone I have in Wales—approved, good stone—sufficient to face the whole of the twenty tenements, and the whole of the stone required for the collegiate school. But the vitality of the entire building is in your hands—at least I hope so, in the shape of pounds, shillings, and pence, and I trust the figures will speak for themselves more to the purpose than I have spoken.”

Mr. Webster concluded by moving the resolution, which was seconded in an extremely eloquent speech by Mr. ROBERT BELL.

Sir GEORGE ARMYTAGE moved, “That Messrs. Coutts and Company be the bankers, at the West-end, and Messrs. Roberts, Curtis, and Company, in the City.”

Mr. FRANK MATTHEWS seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

The SECRETARY then read the list of subscriptions already received, amounting to nearly 900*l*.

Sir WILLIAM DE BATHE, seconded by Mr. BRADY, M.P., proposed "That the thanks of this meeting are hereby given to Charles Kean, Esq., for his impartial and efficient services as Chairman of this meeting, and for his kindness in offering the use of his theatre." (Cheers.)

Mr. KEAN having acknowledged the compliment, the proceedings terminated.

Within a few weeks after the meeting at the Princess's Theatre, the Committee published their first Report, containing the gratifying announcement that her Majesty the Queen had graciously given her consent to become Patroness, accompanied by a donation of 100*l*. The entire amount collected at that date reached 1,852*l*., without including annual subscriptions to the extent of 215*l*. more. Nothing could be more encouraging than the commencement and prospect. But clouds soon began to gather, and from a quarter where they were least to be expected. The gentleman so highly complimented as the first mover of the scheme, and donor of the land, evinced through his solicitor a disposition to fence round his free gift with legal restrictions and stipulations which apprised the Committee of coming difficulty. After some correspondence of a very unsatisfactory nature, a general meeting of the subscribers was held on the 13th of January, 1859, in the Adelphi Theatre, which had been placed at the disposal of the Provisional Committee by Mr. B. Webster. Their Report was then read, containing a full account of all the proceedings that had taken place. The chair was taken at one o'clock by Lord Tenterden, a nobleman who had always evinced strong sympathies with the members of the dramatic

art. The meeting adopted a unanimous resolution to repudiate Mr. Henry Dodd, and to consider and accept one of two offers of the necessary land made by the Rev. Edward Moore, and the London Necropolis Company. The well-wishers to the cause will have no reason to regret the momentary check, which gave rise to much spontaneous sympathy. Out of evil comes good. Sir William De Bathe and several gentlemen present volunteered at once to supply 50*l.* each, as a separate fund for the purchase of ground without favour or obligation; and many members also proposed to double their subscriptions for the same purpose. It was stated at this second meeting that the sum then in hand amounted to 3,000*l.*, and the annual subscriptions to 250*l.* That the intended College so auspiciously projected will advance rapidly towards completion may be considered as certain as that the cause is charity, and its success involves our national character. At a later meeting, it was finally resolved to accept the ground offered near Woking, by the London Necropolis Company. The first stone of the building is expected to be laid in September, 1859.

Few names will be more missed from the playbills, than that of John Pritt Harley, who died, we may say suddenly, at his residence in Gower-street, on Sunday, the 22nd of August, 1858. He very nearly added another to the list of actors who have fallen "in harness." Harley was the son of a highly respectable draper and silk-mercant, in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, where he was himself born. He was intended for the medical profession, and afterwards for the law, but an innate attachment to the drama, rigidly curbed by his nearest relatives, gratified itself with the first opportunity; and some juvenile efforts meeting with warm encouragement, determined his future life. His regular theatrical career may be dated from April, 1808, when he became

a member of Mr. Trotter's company, then manager of the Gravesend, Worthing, and Brighton theatres. From thence he migrated to the York circuit, succeeding to the ample line of comic characters vacated by Fawcett, Mathews, Emery, and Knight. In the summer of 1811, having returned to Brighton, he was seen and engaged by Mr. Arnold for the then Lyceum Theatre, where he appeared on the 15th of July, as *Marcelli*, in the manager's opera of the "Devil's Bridge," and *Peter Fidget*, in Beazley's farce of the "Boarding House." During the same year, as we have already mentioned, he established his winter quarters at Drury-lane, and made a most successful introduction on the 16th of September. Bannister's farewell benefit had taken place on the 1st of June preceding, so that a wide field was open to rising ability.

At Drury Lane, with occasional excursions to the country and engagements at the Lyceum, where he for some time undertook the duties of stage manager, Harley remained for more than twenty years, until Mr. Braham opened the St. James's Theatre, in 1836, where he joined the company formed by that gentleman. He soon after, however, returned to his old quarters, and was with Mr. Macready, at Covent Garden, in 1838, and afterwards with Madame Vestris and Mr. Charles Mathews when they opened the same establishment two years later. He then joined Mr. Bunn at Drury Lane, and finally, when Mr. Charles Kean made his great effort to restore the fortunes of the legitimate drama at the Princess's Theatre, in 1850, he gave in his adhesion to the cause, and remained from that period an active and prominent member of the company. His last original part was *Peter Pounce*, in the farce called "Samuel in Search of Himself." He succeeded Edmund Kean as master of the Drury Lane theatrical fund, and held that office until his death.

Harley rose rapidly in public favour ; in humour and versatility he almost equalled his model, Bannister, the general round of whose characters he successfully filled. His rising reputation was greatly assisted by original parts in successful farces, amongst which may be enumerated *Jack Phantom*, in "Frightened to Death;" *Popolino*, in the "Sleeping Draught;" and *Amoroso*, *King of Little Britain* in the burlesque of the same name. In 1816, when "Every Man in his Humour" was revived for Edmund Kean's *Kitely*, Harley sustained *Bobadil*, a great attempt for one comparatively new to the London boards, and was thought by many to be the best that had appeared since the days of Woodward. In the Shakespearean clowns he had a quaint natural humour peculiar to himself, flowing without effort, and copied from no example, but the product of his own conception, and embodied according to his physical attributes. No actor, not even Munden or Liston, ever excited more genuine laughter. It was impossible to feel dull when Harley was upon the stage. The exercise of his art appeared delightful to himself, and imparted congenial gratification to his audience. He was the very opposite of what is understood by the terms, a dry, laborious, hard-working actor. Such men literally drag out attention, and earn their fame and money by throes and painful earnestness ; but they rarely cause the pulse of the spectator to quicken, or his thoughts to lose for a time all consciousness of the outward cares of life. Harley was one of the last representatives and disciples of a genuine style, which younger aspirants would do wisely to study, before the few survivors of the generation have entirely passed away. The reception with which our old friend was invariably greeted, must have convinced him in the most conclusive manner that ancient favorites are not forgotten because fresher candidates may happen

to be in the field, and that in spite of the railway speed of modern improvement, the old school could stand by the new and lose no ground.

The name of Harley was identified with an extensive range of parts which no one could touch like himself. They form a numerous family, and were looked upon as his personal property. We know not to whom he could have bequeathed them, or who can claim legitimate succession as heir at law, now that a reversion has occurred. On Friday, the 20th of August, he acted *Launcelot Gobbo* with unusual spirit, and in reply to one or two observations as to how well he seemed, answered that he never felt better. Of the numerous audience on that night assembled at the Princess's Theatre, not one who enjoyed the grotesque activity with which he skipped across the bridge when dismissed by *Shylock*, imagined that they looked and laughed for the last time, and that the fiat had gone forth destined so rapidly to close his earthly career. As he reached the wing he was seized with paralysis of the left side, and with assistance reached the green-room where he was laid on the sofa. Medical aid being immediately provided, the case was pronounced imminent, and as soon as possible he was conveyed to his own house in Gower-street, his sister and only surviving relative (since dead) being previously apprised by Mr. Ellis, the stage manager, that an accident had happened to him. In a few hours he lost recollection, sank gradually, and expired, apparently without suffering or effort, on the afternoon of Sunday, the 22nd August. The last coherent words he uttered were a quotation from the "Midsummer Night's Dream," "I have an exposition of sleep come upon me." It is not to be supposed that he thereby indicated any consciousness of his approaching end. It was merely the utterance of a familiar passage with regard to his

immediate sensation of drowsiness. Something similar occurred when John Wesley was dangerously ill and supposed to be at the point of death in Ireland, and whose mind could scarcely be expected to be imbued with the imagery of Shakespeare. Observing the countenance of a lady who sat by his side endeavouring to conceal her emotion under assumed tranquillity, he looked towards her and said, "She sits like Patience on a monument, smiling at Grief."

Different statements have appeared as to Harley's age. We have reason to believe, on good authority, that had he lived to reach another birthday he would have completed seventy-three. He had also long been accounted one of the rich men of the stage, but this, to the surprise of all, was found to be erroneous. Except his furniture and personal effects he had no realized property. Yet he had received large sums, was not known to indulge in extravagant propensities, or to have suffered by speculation. At one time he had a very considerable investment in the funds. How did he dispose of his superfluity? This is a mystery not likely to be unravelled. Great mistakes are often made as to the savings of actors, which are not unfrequently estimated at more than they have ever received. Harley's life must have been happy beyond the ordinary lot. He was respected and liked by all who knew him. He had a merry heart, an equal temper, and an interminable fund of anecdote, enjoying society, and contributing his full share in lively conversation. He had never encumbered himself with the cares of a family, remaining unmarried throughout a long and successful professional career, in which he encountered but a small share of the ordinary rubs and disappointments. It seems rather a remarkable coincidence that only a few weeks before, his friend and comrade Bartley died at nearly the same

age and from a similar attack. Bartley, however, laboured under a heart complaint, so that his sudden demise might have been more readily looked for. But when men have reached and passed the term named by the Psalmist, and may be supposed to be ready for the great change, it matters little whether a learned disease with a hard name, the sudden rupture of a vital chord, or mere exhausted nature, is the proximate cause of their departure.

The long and brilliant season at the Princess's Theatre terminated on the evening of the 3rd of September, when the "Merchant of Venice" was presented to a crowded house with undiminished effect, and for the seventy-second time without intermission. Had not a short interval of rest been absolutely necessary, this beautiful play would, in all probability, have run on to the full completion of one hundred nights,—the ordinary term of a Princess's Shakespearean revival. When the curtain fell on the last scene, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were unanimously summoned to receive a parting compliment, after which Mr. C. Kean came forward alone, and took his temporary leave of the audience in the following short but emphatic speech :—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—At the close of each successive season it has ever been my custom to address a few words to you in thankfulness for your kind support. The present year, from various circumstances, in part unavoidable, and in part unexpected, has been to me a period of great responsibility, anxiety, and fatigue; relieved, however, by evidences and expressions of public feeling and sympathy, the memory of which can only fade with life. Contrary to my original intention, I feel compelled, from the mental and bodily strain I have undergone, to seek a few weeks of comparative repose,

that I may be the better able to bring to a successful termination my next and last season.

“Permit me, therefore, to take this opportunity of announcing my intention to re-open this house on Saturday, the 2d of October; and at the same time to state that, on the 29th of August next, I shall take my final leave as director of the Princess’s Theatre. In the meantime, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me, in Mrs. Kean’s name, as well as my own, respectfully and gratefully to bid you farewell.”

The season, we have said, was brilliant; so it was in exertion and apparent effect. We wish we could add, successful, in a pecuniary sense. But to this it was diametrically opposed, the loss exceeding 4,000*l*. A casual observer and occasional visitor who sees a crowded house, considers one sample an index of the whole, but he knows nothing of the enormous outlay and nightly expense, which too often exceed the aggregate returns. The local causes of deficiency, in the present instance, may be chiefly traced to the American failures, which paralyzed the commercial world, to an Italian Opera at cheap prices, through the entire winter, and to the “Festival Performances,” which drained the purses of the theatrical constituency, and abstracted large sums from their legitimate recipients.

In the course of the eleven months’ duration of the expired season, nineteen different pieces were played, of which four only were new; the pantomime and three farces. Out of two hundred and sixty-nine acting nights, there were only forty-two not devoted to Shakespeare.

Every human discovery and improvement, all that advances philosophy, science, literature, or mechanical invention, is doomed to undergo the three successive

phases of opposition, ridicule, and adoption. Mr. C. Kean has pre-eminently illustrated this fact in the progress of his professional life. His claims, long and obstinately contested, are at length universally admitted. His restorations of Shakespeare are received as the most truthful homage ever rendered to the greatest genius that England or the world has produced. His fertile mind and extensive scholarship have called into life effects never before imagined; whilst his versatile embodiments of so many great characters in the Shakespearean range have identified him, as an actor, with the Garricks, Hendersons, and Kembles of bygone ages, and more especially with his own father, who, in two or three leading elements, excelled them all.

It is too often the lot of living merit—and the condition is a hard one—to be treated with injustice; to be undervalued until a gap, not easily filled, impresses the importance of a public loss, and the difficulty of filling up a vacancy. Then follow the selfish regret and unavailing penitence which mourn the absence of a possession, the full value of which is only ascertained when lost beyond recovery; extorted tears to consecrate the ashes of the dead, instead of the spontaneous tribute which ought to soothe and adorn the presence of the living; a posthumous instalment on a just debt, which, however flattering to his heirs, is paid too late to gratify the silent creditor. There are such things, too, as personal enmities, neither forgotten nor foregone until they can be no longer indulged. More fortunate than many who seek the temple of fame, Mr. C. Kean has not had to wait for this tardy acknowledgment. His merits and services as a public teacher are freely conceded, and he enjoys the universal respect which attaches to unblemished private character and rare professional excellence.

Throughout the season of 1857-1858, Mr. Kean's name was seldom absent from the bills. Night after night he delighted the public with such varied performances as *Prospero*, *Richard II.*, *Hamlet*, *Louis XI.*, *Mephistopheles*, *King Lear*, and *Shylock*. It is seldom that a great actor and manager, when he has won the double reputation, the acknowledged supremacy, for which he has so perseveringly toiled, continues to impose on himself the physical labour, which, if carried too far, would break down the strongest constitution. Garrick and John Kemble, for many years before their retirement, acted only twice or thrice a week, at particular portions of the season. They reposed on their laurels; but they remembered also that—

“ Time hath a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion ;
A great siz'd monster of ingratitude :
And to have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail,
In monumental mockery.”

They therefore took care to present themselves now and then on select occasions, to keep curiosity alive, to prevent its being entirely attracted towards others, and to watch their own fame, lest it should tarnish by disuse. But Mr. C. Kean during his period of management never allowed himself an intermitting relief. He resembled a sentinel continually at his post, and worked with as much untiring perseverance as in the days of his early novitiate when slowly climbing up the steps of the ladder. Such constant exertion could only be sustained by that inborn enthusiasm which is ever the accompaniment of true genius. It is a fact which includes a flattering compliment, while at the same time it imposes a harassing condition, that although supported by an excellent working company, few plays

were found to be attractive at the Princess's Theatre, unless the names of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were included in the cast. Here is at once a conclusive argument in reply to the diminishing but still pertinacious section of cavillers, who are ready with an objection for everything, and have so long endeavoured to maintain that accessorial embellishment has injured genuine art, and that the most important figures in the painting are obscured by the gorgeousness of the surrounding framework. Take away such representatives of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines as Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean, and there prejudiced Zoili would soon have it rendered palpable to them, that the upholsterer and property man (those favourite figures for a sneer), the scene-painter and mechanist, are incompetent to touch the hearts of an audience, or to vindicate the superiority of our matchless mover of the passions. When the intricate machinery of a watch is brought into harmony by mechanical skill, it is the mainspring alone that can set the whole in action ; break that, and all the rest becomes torpid and ineffective. It is precisely thus with the blended elements of a represented play. The scenery, the costumes, the architecture, the arrangement of incidental groups, the evolutions of well-trained supernumeraries, the most accurate historical reflection of bygone ages and manners,—all these adjuncts may be called into use, and restored as perfectly as classical taste and antiquarian knowledge can reproduce them : but still, the life-like reality, the animating charm, the mainspring in fact, lies exclusively within the faculty of acting. Let the performers who are set down for the great parts, fall below the corresponding level which the genius of the poet demands, and it has ever been seen that they become indistinctly confused with the figures in the background, and the entire picture fades into vapid

mediocrity. Without acting of a very high order, no extent of pictorial embellishment could command one hundred successive repetitions of a Shakespearcan drama. It is only by a well-balanced union of forces that the effect is produced. Divide these forces, and weakness supersedes power. "The hairs in a horse's tail," says Dr. Donne, in a quaint comparison, "concur in a single root of beauty and strength; but being separated and plucked out one by one, they lose all value, and serve for little better than springes and snares."

CHAPTER XV.

MR. C. KEAN'S FAREWELL SEASON AS MANAGER OF THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE—MERCHANT OF VENICE CONTINUED—SECOND REVIVAL OF KING JOHN—DITTO OF MACBETH—PRODUCTION OF MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING—MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN AS BENEDICK AND BEATRICE—FARCE OF THIRTY-THREE NEXT BIRTHDAY—PANTOMIME OF THE KING OF THE CASTLE—JEALOUS WIFE—CORSIKAN BROTHERS—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM—LOUIS THE ELEVENTH—HAMLET.

A SHORT recess of four weeks passed rapidly over, and on Saturday, the 2nd of October, 1858, Mr. C. Kean opened his last campaign as manager of the Princess's Theatre, with the seventy-third representation of the "Merchant of Venice," preceded by the farce of "Dying for Love." Once more the curtain rose on the Queen of the Adriatic in all her reanimated glory. The enthusiastic welcome with which Mr. and Mrs. Kean were greeted on their appearance, told emphatically the feeling of the public, and spoke, in a combined voice, of estimation and anticipated regret. Two changes had taken place in the cast of the play. *Nerissa* was now acted, and very agreeably, by Miss Bufton, a young lady of considerable promise and personal attractions, who improves rapidly with experience. Mr. Saker succeeded the lamented Harley, as *Launcelot Gobbo*, and deserves his full meed of praise for a careful study of a part, difficult under such peculiar circumstances.

To give as much variety as possible to his concluding season, Mr. Kean determined to repeat, in quick succession, a series of his principal Shakesperean revivals.

Accordingly, in a fortnight, the "Merchant of Venice," on the 17th of October, gave place to "King John," which had not been represented since 1852. Nothing could be more complete than the change. From the banks of the Brenta and the sunny skies of Italy,—from the gay frolics of the carnival, and the stately, mediæval magnificence of the "dogeless" city,—Mr. Kean, by a single wave of his managerial wand, carried us into other regions and more distant times; recalling our thoughts to fix them on a remarkable though not glorious period of domestic history. We were now in the stormy era of the Plantagenets, and found ourselves treading the baronial halls and palaces of Norman England, or listening to the war-blast on the old battle-fields of Anjou and Kent.

We have three plays on the subject of King John. The first, anonymous, earlier than Shakespeare's (in 1591), and which by some speculators has been attributed to Marlowe. An action for libel would almost lie on the insinuation. Here Shakespeare found the plot, characters, and incidents. These he freely used; but the nervous language, the glowing thoughts, the power, the pathos, and the passion, are all his own, and could not have emanated from any other source. There is not a single spark of either in the poor and vulgar original. In 1745, old Colley Cibber, fired with the mania of improving Shakespeare, inflicted on the town a pernicious imitation, entitled, "Papal Tyranny in the reign of King John." On this memorable occasion, the ancient laureate, who had lost his teeth, returned to the stage, and mumbled through *Cardinal Pandulph*; but the affair died a natural death, and its failure had this advantage, that, since then, no sacrilegious invader has ventured to substitute his *crambe repetita* for the genuine text of Shakespeare. During the last hundred

years, "King John" has been repeatedly brought forward under successive and rival dynasties, but with mistakes and shortcomings to the last; until Mr. C. Kean, in 1852, inaugurated his new system with a more perfect revival than had yet been presented by the most highly-gifted of his predecessors. As now re-produced, the play had the advantage of his own intermediate experience, with the high finish of those powers of acting which have grown by progressive steps to their complete development.

Although far from the best in Shakespeare's historical series, "King John" has characters of startling power, and passages of poetic beauty, equal to any that he has written elsewhere. When he selected this subject, we have often wondered that he did not ascend a little higher in time, and choose the popular and stirring epoch which immediately preceded,—the reign of the lion-hearted Richard. Here was a monarch more in accordance with English notions of regal heroism; and his death by the hand of the archer Bertrand de Gourdon, at the siege of the Castle of Chalus, with his dying merey to the man by whom he was prematurely cut off, although not carried out after his decease, would have supplied a catastrophe more dramatically striking, and less repulsive than the expiring agonies of his miserable brother. The moral in either case is nearly the same—the transient nature of earthly grandeur, and the emptiness of all human ambition.

The foreign policy of John was timid and inglorious; the domestic troubles of his reign invariably resulted from his own overweening tyranny. Shakespeare has entirely passed over all allusion to the great national Charter, which the English barons wrung from their cowardly but despotic master. He may have done this from delicacy towards the absolutists of his own

may, Elizabeth and James, who were also his personal patrons ; but at all events he moulded to his own purposes the other incidents in the reign of King John with the scenic arrangement of the old play, scattering about in rich profusion his own harmonious verse, his vigorous passion, and his boundless amplification of mind and feeling. He has engrafted no new characters, but he has gloriously heightened the rough sketches he found in a barren soil. We cannot revel in reminiscences which stir an Englishman's blood, and fillip his pride, when our thoughts revert to this dark period of our national annals. But it must not be denied, and may be profitably studied and remembered. Truly refreshing it is to find the living reality evoked on the boards of the Princess's Theatre, in the form of the most agreeable intellectual lesson, and with all the stately adjuncts by which instruction can be seasoned and recommended.

It is not easy to estimate Mr. C. Kean's performance of the regal felon of the line of Anjou by any fixed analysis, or comparative standard of excellence. Again, he presented us with a complete and unique portrait, which we can trace to no particular family, or antecedent class. The English monarch is to the full as wicked and remorseless as Louis the Eleventh ; but our thoughts never revert to the one while witnessing the same evil passions depicted in the mind and person of the other. John is a compound of every contemptible and loathsome attribute, either as man or monarch ; ambitious and cruel to the last extreme ; not absolutely a coward in the field, but a moral poltroon in the conduct of life ; helpless and abject in adversity ; covetous, overbearing, and impolitic when fortune smiles on him : a strange blending of opposite qualities, which nevertheless often meet, exhibiting fool and knave in alternating propor-

tions. During his whole existence, as brought before us by Shakespeare, we find nothing to admire, and as he expires under the racking agonies of poison, while we pay our just tribute to the power of his dramatic representative, we feel relieved by the departure of the man.

The pervading gloom of the play is felicitously relieved by the humorous, dare-devil gallantry of Falconbridge, who vindicates his royal blood, and becomes even dignified as his responsibility increases. But the softening charm lies with Constance and Arthur. Fortune dealt hardly with them. Holinshed relates that Arthur was imprisoned at Rouen, when he was supposed to be murdered, as some said, by his uncle's own hand. He was an adult youth and not a child, as Shakespeare has represented him. This is certainly an important deviation from fact, but by this poetic licence the bard has invested his supplications to Hubert with the simplicity of infantine innocence, and has given us one of the most affecting scenes he ever imagined. Again, the veritable Lady Constance of history demands our respect and sympathy with less compelling influence than the wronged widow and bereaved parent, so powerfully transferred to the dramatic canvas. Maternal anguish and despair have never been so naturally conceived, or so pathetically expressed, as in the Constance of Shakespeare. Enthusiasts in classic lore may turn to the *Clytemnestra*, *Hecuba*, and *Andromache* of Euripides,—but they will seek in vain for those heart-rending exclamations, those overwhelming touches of nature, which lacerate the hearts of the audience, until they find relief in tears. Her apostrophe to death, beginning, “amiable, lovely death,” in her last scene, is superior to that fine invocation of the chorus in the “Suppliants” of Æschylus, to the same power. There

is nothing in the French imitators of the ancients, in the most vaunted passages of Corneille or Racine, to be taken into comparison. Voltaire affected to ridicule Shakespeare, and tried to make his countrymen follow his example. The French themselves look upon their cold declamatory tragedies as perfect in construction and dialogue. English taste judges them by a standard very distinct from the scholastics of Aristotle. Accustomed to the uncontrolled flights of Shakespeare, we set little value on unities and classical restrictions. We acknowledge readily the transcendent powers of a Rachel and a Talma, while we wish they had better materials to work with, and varieties of character to delineate more in accordance with the ordinary sympathies and feelings of humanity.

Such a noble part as *Constance* requires a great representative, and on looking down the annals of the stage, we find the names of Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Siddons, and Miss O'Neill, successively identified with the widow of *Geoffrey*. Mrs. C. Kean has put forth a proud claim to be associated with this honoured list, and the claim will be unanimously conceded. Her performance is truly wonderful,—by far the finest female portraiture on the living stage, and by many degrees her own *chef-d'œuvre*. How different from the playful elegance of Portia, and yet how thoroughly and intensely Shakesperean! It is worth going a hundred miles to see, and will be required to be seen again and again before its beauties can be felt or understood as they deserve. Young actresses would do well to study this accomplished mistress of her art, while they have yet an opportunity, for such a model is not likely to be supplied to them again.

Next to *Constance* and *King John*, *Falconbridge*, *Hubert*, and *Young Arthur*, stand prominently forward

as characters of importance. All three were well personated by Mr. Walter Lacy, Mr. Ryder, and Miss Ellen Terry, who succeeded her elder sister. Every part was in the hands of an adequate performer. The entire cast bore evidence of the completeness of the Princess's company, so soon destined to be dispersed, and never again united under the same banner.

Macbeth was revived on Monday, the 1st of November, and performed alternately with "King John" for some weeks. Five years had elapsed since its first production by Mr. Kean, but nearly all the principal characters were still in the same hands, the changes being chiefly amongst the rank and file.

A quarter of a century hence, when the events of to-day will be included in the records of the past, the generation of the then present hour may possibly estimate at a truer value than we do now, the results of Mr. C. Kean's eight years, of what may be exclusively called *Shakespearean* management, at the Princess's theatre. Time, the universal purifier, can alone decide the question, as to how far national taste, refinement, education, and manners, may have derived a permanent and a beneficial impulse from a source hitherto undervalued, or entirely passed over in the philosophical speculations and practical theories of teachers, preachers, and orators of every class; always on the alert to enlighten and advance the world, but not invariably happy in the means recommended to promote the desired end.

We do not believe it possible that any thinking person should see such a dramatic exhibition as "Macbeth," at the Princess's theatre, without an impression that there must be something in this beyond "a show," and that the delightful recreation thus imparted, is not a fiction of the hour, to make the labourer forget his

toil, the student relax his overwrought abstraction, or the constitutionally indolent rouse up his torpid faculties; but that it combines a profound moral, and has in it an instructive power, which elevates thought and feeling, and tends to make man happier as well as better. Some will smile, deriding this as mere enthusiasm, and it may be that it is so; but without enthusiasm the world would be but a weary road to travel on, and many would faint under their appointed trial.

Shakespeare has taken his materials for "*Macbeth*" from Holinshed. The subject is well adapted to a dramatic poet's purpose. It has all that his form of composition requires—situations and characters powerfully contrasted, events rising in interest, each growing out of the other and leading up to the catastrophe. The intermingling of supernatural agency was never so appropriate. The weak point in *Macbeth's* character is superstition, and on that weakness he gradually falls into the fathomless abyss of crime. Read the chronicle, and what can be more bald and meagre than the manner in which the events are related. They contain the argument and outline of a dramatic poem, but no colouring. See the play, and who does not feel the sublimity of thought, the harrowing intensity, the redundant images, the practical reflections, the majestic poetry, once heard never to be forgotten, which the genius of Shakespeare has called into life, and consigned to his lawful heirs, the actors, to perpetuate by their executive skill. To find anything to compare with "*Macbeth*," we must go back to *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*. There we may find glimmerings of kindred inspiration, but we shall seek in vain for them nearer our own times. Let us descend from Greece to Rome, in her best days of poetic pretension. Is there any spark of Shakespeare's muse in the dull, laboured tragedies of *Seneca*, or who-

ever may have written them in his name? None, that we could ever discover. What is there of similar genius in the crude metaphysics of Schiller? Not a scintillation. What in the Frenchified classicality of Corneille? In spite of our respect for M. Guizot's critical acumen, we look upon the attempt to set up a parallel between the father of the French stage and the father of ours as literary profanation almost demanding criminal proceedings. It is futile to endeavour to silence us, as Voltaire tried to do a century ago, by charges of violations of the unities, breaches of decorum, sins of anachronism, the coarseness of here and there a conventional phrase, or the carelessness of rapid composition. In answer to all these pop-gun batteries, we oppose the unapproachable beauties of the poetry, the profound philosophy and moral, the majestic scope of the invention, which imagined new worlds when old ones were exhausted, and distanced time himself in the race for immortality. In fine, we say, show us a poem or a play equal to "*Macbeth*," taken in all its components and bearings, in the collected literature of the world.

When Mr. C. Kean enters as *Macbeth*, he gives the key-note of the character before he has spoken a dozen lines. He prepares us for the description which his wife subsequently gives of him :—

"Thou wouldst be great ;
Art not without ambition ; but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily ; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win."

After his interview with the witches he never loses the bewildered look of a man whose mind has been shaken by a supernatural encounter, and a congenial prophecy. He still has energy and manliness of soul.

but he has lost confidence in himself, and is no longer sure of anything. The agitation of his mind resembles the rolling of the sea in a storm. He fights and struggles yet, but he is under a fatal influence,—the prediction of the witches, and the stinging excitements of his wife. His nature is good, but he yields to the double attack. He is brave but superstitious; differing entirely from Richard the Third, who is naturally callous and void of conscience. *Macbeth* subsides into crime; and though we abhor his deeds, we think and feel he had that within him which ought to have shaped a better course. His despairing energy in the fifth act clothes his fall with something approaching to dignity. Such is Shakespeare's "Macbeth," as reflected by Mr. C. Kean. Some of his predecessors have been wonderfully great in insulated scenes; but, as an entire performance, sound judges place his above them all. We have seen many Macbeths, and the peculiarities of each come back upon us with the freshness of an event of yesterday. Of those who flourished in the ages of our fathers and grandfathers, the records are so ample and minute, that we are as familiar with them as if they also had fallen within our personal observation. Mr. C. Kean, it is true, has the advantage of scenic accompaniments, pictorial accuracy, and historical costume, which impart a reality to the action, very imperfectly sought for in earlier days. But let the merit of this rest with himself, for the idea and application are as much his own as the effect is unprecedented.

Lady Macbeth is associated with her partner throughout the play. The image and presence of the wife cannot be separated from her help-mate. The chronicle gives but a few lines indicative of her disposition. She is called the stimulatress of her husband to his first deed of blood,—“a woman very ambitious, burning

with an unquenchable desire to bear the name of 'queen.'” This slight groundwork is wrought up by Shakespeare into a character of such dramatic power, so repulsive, but irresistibly imposing, that it throws into the shade the finest relics of the Greek tragedians, those vaunted masters and models of the grand and terrific. Compared to *Lady Macbeth*, *Clytemnestra* or *Medea* are angels of peace and gentleness. Yet there is no part on the stage that can win more applause by the commanding strength of her mind and the vigour of her language. But for her remorse in the end, darkly hinted through the incoherent murmurings of her sleep, we should be tempted to reject her as an alien to the human family. It is Shakespeare and not history that has irradiated this dark heroine with the single flash of humanity, by which the unmingled savageness of her heart is brightened. She would have slain the unconscious *Duncan* herself, when she stole into his chamber, and laid the daggers ready for her husband's use. With the swiftness of lightning the infernal suggestion flashed across her mind, but nature spoke for once;—"he resembled her father as he slept," and her murderous hand became paralysed.

In some of the *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, or in her published correspondence, we have read that her notion of *Lady Macbeth's* personal appearance depicted her as a woman of small stature, with light hair, complexion, and eyes. This is startling. Such physical attributes were very different to those of the Queen of Tragedy herself, and quite opposed to what we should associate with the being designated by Dr. Johnson, in unvarnished terms, as "an ogress."

Mrs. C. Kean has proved herself the legitimate successor of Mrs. Siddons, in *Lady Macbeth*, as in *Constance*. Both performances are so true to the author's

meaning, while so distinct from each other, that it is impossible to say which is best. The scenes of "Macbeth" would fall flat, nay, they would almost be unintelligible, without the support of a lady quite up to the mark of the talent required for her husband. When Madame Ristori was here, her *Lady Macbeth*, not much run after by the public, found inordinate favour with more than one professed critic. We bow to the gallantry which eulogized a handsome woman, a foreigner, and an accomplished artist; but to compare her *Lady Macbeth* to that of our own representative was as unnecessary as it was absurd. The superiority of the latter is glaringly manifested throughout, and pre-eminently in the banquet and sleeping scenes. The sufferings of that midnight walk, as represented by Mrs. C. Kean, almost atone for the blood with which she has deluged the play. Madame Ristori, it must be admitted, had the disadvantage of a Macbeth, as comic as Robson in the burlesque, but without an atom of his extraordinary power.

On Saturday the 19th of November, the performances at the Princess's were varied by the production of "Much Ado about Nothing;" perhaps the most complete comedy ever dashed off by the rich fecundity of Shakespeare's genius. It is a coruscation of brilliancy, teeming with genuine wit, effective situations, and contrasted characters, forming a most delightful relief to the two stately tragedies with which it was flanked on either side. The play comprises a double plot, most ingeniously contrived and disentangled. Yet some captious objectors find fault with the conspiracy against *Hiero*, as clumsy and improbable. If such hypercriticism is to stand good, it will break down all that successive ages have considered excellent in dramatic composition; and if the imaginative attributes of the drama are to be judged by, and reduced

to matter of fact rules, we may banish at once, fancy, invention, and poetic licence. Besides which, daily experience impresses the conviction that the incidents of real life are often more inconsistent and improbable than the wildest fictions of romance.

But whatever may be the merits or defects of the episodial plot of "Much Ado about Nothing," the attention and interest of the spectators are almost exclusively engrossed by *Benedick* and *Beatrice*. They form the charm and cynosure of the play. We think of little else, from their first tilting match in the opening scene, until they are finally tricked into "a mountain of mutual affection." These lively combatants are the most exquisite of companions, delicious sweeteners of life's variegated feast, however a doubt may arise as to their being the most promising and happily matched of married couples. They are the pure and beautiful emanations of Shakespeare's creative mind. He first conceived and gave a miniature of them as the *Biron* and *Rosaline* of "Love's Labour's Lost." In the present comedy they are expanded into full portraits, and launched on a new sphere of action adopted by the great master for his immediate purpose. It is seldom that Shakespeare takes the trouble to invent his incidents. He usually draws from history or earlier fiction, amplifying and adorning at pleasure the restricted and not unfrequently commonplace materials supplied from current sources. The plot on the two self-styled marriage haters is most happily conceived; and as they are as similar in disposition as the difference of sex allows, repeating the same mode of deception on each is natural and consistent.

Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were seen to great advantage as *Benedick* and *Beatrice*. The parts are well selected to afford such opportunities of playing up to each other, which associated feelings alone understand, and nothing

but constant practice can exercise with the high finish of art. *Benedick* has ever been a favourite with audience and actors. Garrick, as we are told in his memoirs, absolutely revelled in his delineation of this gallant humorist. Henderson, who followed him, was thought by good judges to tread closely on the heels of his predecessor, although when he rehearsed this very part before the great manager, the latter discouraged him by saying, "Young man, you must get the worsted out of your throat before you can expect to be an actor." Lewis had all the breadth and vivacity required, but he wanted *aplomb*, and marred the general effect by being somewhat flippant and fidgetty. Elliston, in his best days, was considered an excellent representative, and Charles Kemble's impersonation commanded universal praise. Mr. C. Kean's may fairly be included in the same list. When witnessing his soldierlike and graceful bearing, with the easy, unlaboured humour by which, with a single glance of the eye, a turn of expression in the features, or a change of intonation in the voice, he excites the audience to a unanimous burst of laughter or applause, we can scarcely identify the same individual whom, a night or two before, we have listened to and looked upon as the sanguinary *Macbeth*, the gloomy *John*, the crafty tyrant *Louis*, or the frenzied octogenarian *Lear*. The versatile powers of the actor, as thus displayed, are truly marvellous. In personal, as in mental attributes, nothing can be more contrasted than these solemn, soul-appalling protagonists, and the accomplished soldier, scholar, and man of fashion, the joyous *Benedick*, the type of all that we conceive of elegant and fascinating in what Lord Byron aptly termed "gentleman's comedy." Mr. Kean's first step on the stage bespoke his full conception of the character. His early scenes gradually worked up the spectators and himself as his

humour progressed. There was no occasional flag or pause, no sinking to rise again after a dull interval. It was all buoyancy and flashes of light, each following closely on the other with increasing brightness. We may select for especial praise, and as indexes to the subsequent scenes, the two celebrated soliloquies in the second act, in the garden, where the supposed love of *Beatrice* is conveyed to his astonished mind by his accidental and unseen presence at the planned conversation of his friends. We must add to these his fervid exit with a determination to requite such unlooked for affection as it deserved. No acting, in the genuine vein of the comic muse, could exceed this, which drew down universal plaudits. In the challenge to *Claudio*, *Benedick* loses for the moment all his constitutional light-heartedness. He is transferred into a deeply serious man, in one of the most painful of situations, peremptorily but reluctantly imposed on him by duty and love. Mr. C. Kean, in this finely discriminated passage of the part, is perfectly at home. He plays the scene with marked feeling and delicacy. Charles Young, in general a noble actor, quite mistook it. He preserved even here a comic expression which destroyed the effect, and would have thrown Shakespeare into a cold perspiration, could he have witnessed the strange perversion of his meaning in conscious presence.

Beatrice, in dramatic value, stands on a par with *Benedick*. She yields him no jot of precedence or superiority. Happy in the possession of an amiable, warm-hearted temperament, and unaffected spirits, she returns him arrow for arrow in the combat of words. Her gaiety is artless, natural and unforced. The essence of her mind is wit, which, like *Benedick*, she directs against love and matrimony. But extremes often meet, and thus these jarring elements are brought to blend into

harmonious and mutual subjection. Mrs. C. Kean thoroughly comprehends every nice shade and feature of this masterly portrait. She presents it in all the glowing life imagined by the author, but without exaggeration or over-colouring. With all her elevated position in society, and its associations of manner and habit, her warm sympathies and cultivated tastes, some Shakespearean investigators, seeing through a small microscope, have discovered in *Beatrice* a tendency to self-will, a strength of purpose, which augur inauspiciously for her connubial life *in prospectu*, and may darken it with an occasional cloud. They affect to tremble for *Beneditck*, "the married man," and turn their thoughts with some apprehension to the "predestinate scratched face" he so earnestly deprecates. We confess that we never could take this view, and Mrs. C. Kean has confirmed our opposite conviction to our infinite delight. Shrewish wives are not gifted with the good breeding and good temper of her *Beatrice*. We feel truly grateful to this accomplished mistress of her art for vindicating, by her accurate and refined perception, the true intent of Shakespeare; and for allowing no infusion of selfishness, no wayward humour to blemish or weaken the moral grace and beauty of one of his most captivating heroines.

Little was said in the bill, and less in the printed version of the play, of the new effects so lavishly introduced in the stage-arrangements and scenery, which lost nothing in comparison with the recent splendour of the "Merchant of Venice." The opening view, the harbour of Messina, was quite a pictorial gem. The gradual illumination of the lighthouse and various mansions, in almost every window, the moon slowly rising and throwing her silver light upon the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, were managed with imposing reality.

Then followed the masquerade, with its variegated lamps, bridge, gardens, and lake, seen through the arches of the palace. The general acting left nothing to be desired. Mr. F. Matthews added much to his reputation by his impersonation of *Dogberry*. He was quaint, original, and overflowing with stolid, good-humoured importance, reminding the audience of W. Farren in his best days. Mr. Meadows has long been identified with *Verges*; a sketch of senile imbecility acquiring in his hands the prominence of a finished picture.

In our more important notice of the Shakespearean revival, we must not omit the mention of a new farce produced on Monday the 21st of November, called "Thirty-Three next Birthday," adapted from or founded on a French original, but arranged in its English dress by Mr. J. M. Morton. The substance of this amusing prelude may be compressed into a few words. *Miss Havoc*, a single lady, on the verge of thirty-three, is determined to get married, and thinking she can more readily obtain admirers as the young wife of an old gentleman, than as a somewhat mature spinster, persuades an easy-tempered, obliging uncle, *Major Havoc*, to assume the character of *sposo*, and accompany her in that guise to a Welch watering-place. There she speedily wins the hearts of two speculating swains, *Mr. Benson* and *Mr. Cackleberry*, one young, and the other middle-aged. After much equivoque and sundry explosions of passion, the lady accepts the elder lover, *Mr. Cackleberry*, the solicitor, and so the piece concludes. The leading parts were extremely well acted by Miss Murray, Mr. Cooper, and Mr. F. Matthews. The latter, in particular, contributed much to the success.

The usual pantomime was produced at Christmas, but this year from the pen of Mr. Forester (Alfred Crowquill). It proved to be one of the best and most attrac-

tive that had been produced for years. The subject was entirely invented by the author, the title being "The King of the Castle ; or, Harlequin Prince Diamond and the Princess Brighteyes." In the introduction, the elegance and interest of a fairy tale were combined with a fair proportion of broad burlesque, but without trenching on the more legitimate buffooneries of the *Clown* and *Pantaloon*. The surviving elders of the old school, the contemporaries of Grimaldi, father and son, consider the genius of pantomime as dead, buried, and forgotten ; not considering that taste in this, as in other more important matters, has undergone a complete revolution since their school-boy days, when they revelled in the glories of "Mother Goose and the Golden Egg," and that what pleased fifty years ago might be looked upon as coarse, if not unintelligible, by the living generation. It certainly requires more classical knowledge and a higher endowment of intellectual faculty to write a first-rate tragedy or comedy than to compound a good opening to a pantomime ; nevertheless, the latter is a task of great ingenuity, seeing how thoroughly the materials have been ransacked and exhausted. A new idea descends like a ray of light, and an original trick or transformation is as rare as a coin of Otho or Pescennius Niger.

The comic scenes of "The King of the Castle" invented and arranged by Mr. Ellis, stage-manager, and Mr. Cormack, ballet-master, contained some good hits at the passing follies of the day, in which crinoline came in for a conspicuous share. Here again the living pantomimist labours under difficulties unknown to his grandfather. There are few salient eccentricities in modern manners to afford subject for illustration or caricature. The world may be wiser than it was, but it has grown more selfish and calculating, and people have

no longer time to indulge in absurdities, which lead to no increase of worldly store. Formerly, no one could sit in a coffee-room for half an hour, or walk up St. James's-Street without meeting *character* in some decided shape, either developed by dress, bearing, or conversation. Now, we are all alike; ever in a hurry, on the one high road of utilitarianism, thinking, travelling and sleeping at railway speed. All this may tend to make people rich, and sharpen their wordly intellects, but it furnishes no materials for a comic pantomime. Let us, therefore, not criticise too closely, but be thankful to those who still find means to supply us with a few hearty laughs from the old familiar source.

During the run of the pantomime, the old comedy of the "Jealous Wife" was revived. This, with "Louis the Eleventh," and the "Corsican Brothers," alternated the performances, with the Shakespearean plays of "The Merchant of Venice," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Macbeth," "Much Ado about Nothing," and "Hamlet;" forming a rich variety, which produced unceasing attraction. "Hamlet" was performed eleven times to crowded houses. "Age cannot wither" this noble play, "nor custom stale its infinite variety." Let the principal character be well acted, and the attraction never fails. To master the representation of the Danish prince requires the study of a life. John Kemble, speaking from long experience, said so, when on the eve of retirement.

The Germans assume, and many English admirers of German criticism and literature have admitted the claim, that they possess a more correct and thorough appreciation of Shakespeare than we ourselves acknowledge or feel. In support of this assertion they appeal to the elaborate disquisitions on Hamlet in "Wilhelm

Meister's Apprenticeship," as containing the truest analysis of the play, and the principal character, which has yet been given to the world. We rebel utterly against this dictum. Shakespeare was neither a metaphysician nor a transcendentalist.* He was simply an inspired pupil of nature, who wrote as he thought and felt, with unstrained, obvious meaning, and drew his pictures from men as they are, and not from the ideal exaggerations which dogmatic, and frequently miscalled philosophy creates in a morbid mood, and tries to render intelligible by ingenious sophistries. An English auditor in the theatre, and a student in the closet, look upon "Hamlet" less as a poetical illusion than as an actual acquaintance and associate—a familiar being in actual existence. They understand him without perplexing commentary, and when they see him moving before them in living identity, under the person and attributes of a great actor and a faithful reflector of the poet's genius, such as Mr. Charles Kean, they hail the illustration with delight, and a perfect comprehension of what is intended to be conveyed to their understandings, more intense and distinct than any impression they could derive from poring over the labored essays of Göethe and Ulrici.

On Friday, January 28th, 1859, another veteran actor, Charles Farley, the father of the stage, departed this life. Having attained the ripe age of eighty-seven, he outlived all his theatrical contemporaries. Entering the theatrical world in his tenth year, he saw the rise and progress of all the Kembles, Cooke, Young, Edmund Kean,

* No—nor a materialist, nor a freethinker, nor a denier of revelation and a disbeliever in providence and futurity; although Mr W. J. Birch, A.M. of New Inn Hall, Oxon, has laboured hard to prove him all these, in a work published in 1847, entitled "An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespere." This is not the place to show the fallacy of his arguments, which lie broadly open to refutation.

Macready, and Charles Kean. His peculiar talent lay in the superintendence of pantomimes and melo-dramas. He was also the author of several pieces of the latter class. Both in his public and private capacity, he was much esteemed, and his long dramatic experience supplied his conversation with an endless fund of anecdotes.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRESENTATION OF A TESTIMONIAL TO MR. KEAN FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE DRAMATIC COLLEGE—MR. AND MRS. C. KEAN'S ANNUAL BENEFIT IN 1859—LAST SHAKESPEAREAN REVIVAL—KING HENRY THE FIFTH—ORIGINAL EFFECTS—STORMING OF HARFLEUR—BATTLE OF AGINCOURT—INTRODUCED EPISODE OF ACTION TAKEN FROM HISTORICAL AUTHORITIES—MRS. C. KEAN AS THE CHORUS; MR. C. KEAN AS KING HENRY—UNPRECEDENTED ATTRACTION OF THE PLAY—DELINEATION OF NATIONAL CHARACTER—FLUELLEN IDENTIFIED WITH DAVID GAM—CORRESPONDENCE—NEW COMEDIETTA, IF THE CAP FITS.—HENRY THE EIGHTH—BANQUET AND TESTIMONIAL PROPOSED BY THE ETONIANS—NOTICES IN THE PAPERS—CONGRATULATORY LETTERS.

ON Monday, February the 21st, a deputation, consisting of Sir William De Bathe, Bart.; Sir George Armytage, Bart.; Mr. Benjamin Webster, the chairman of the provisional committee of the Dramatic College; and Messrs. Creswick, Jerwood, and Cullenford, waited upon Mr. Charles Kean, at his private residence, in Upper Hyde Park Street, for the purpose of presenting him with the following testimonial:—"In acknowledgment of the great obligation of the Royal Dramatic College, to Charles Kean, Esq., F.S.A., for services rendered by him as chairman of the public meeting held in the Royal Princess's Theatre, on the 21st of July, 1858; for his liberality in undertaking to provide one of the dwellings for the reception of aged and infirm actors and actresses; for his admirable zeal in otherwise promoting the interests of the College; and to record the personal regard and sincere wishes of the Provisional Committee for his future welfare." This testimonial was elegantly inscribed upon vellum by Mr. Moring, of

Holborn. Mr. Webster, in presenting it, spoke in high praise of the great zeal with which Mr. Kean had exerted himself on behalf of the college, and which the latter gentleman responded to in suitable terms.

On Monday, the 28th of March, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean announced their annual benefit and last Shakespearean revival, the play selected being "Henry the Fifth." The usual fly-leaf affixed to the bills concluded with the following passage:—

"As the term of my management is now drawing to a close, I may, perhaps, be permitted, in a few words, to express my thanks for the support and encouragement I have received. While endeavouring, to the best of my ability and judgment, to uphold the interests of the drama in its most exalted form, I may conscientiously assert, that I have been animated by no selfish or commercial spirit. An enthusiast in the art to which my life has been devoted, I have always entertained a deeply rooted conviction, that the plan I have pursued for many seasons, might, in due time, under fostering care, render the stage productive of much benefit to society at large. Impressed with a belief that the genius of Shakespeare soars above all rivalry; that he is the most marvellous writer the world has ever known; and that his works contain stores of wisdom, intellectual and moral, I cannot but hope that one who has toiled for so many years, in admiring sincerity, to spread abroad amongst the multitude these invaluable gems, may, at least, be considered as an honest labourer, adding his mite to the great cause of civilization and educational progress.

"After nine years of unremitting exertions as actor and director, the constant strain of mind and body warns me to retreat from a combined duty which I find

beyond my strength, and in the exercise of which neither zeal, nor devotion, nor consequent success, can continue to beguile me into a belief that the end will compensate for the many attendant troubles and anxieties. It would have been impossible, on my part, to gratify my wishes in the illustration of Shakespeare, had not my previous career as an actor placed me in a position of comparative independence with regard to speculative disappointment. Wonderful as have been the yearly receipts, yet the vast sums expended,—sums, I have every reason to believe, not to be paralleled in any theatre of the same capability throughout the world,—make it advisable that I should now retire from the self-imposed responsibility of management, involving such a perilous outlay; and the more especially, as a building so restricted in size as the Princess's, renders any adequate returns utterly hopeless.

“My earnest aim has been to promote the well-being of my profession; and if, in any degree, I have attained so desirable an object, I trust I may not be deemed presumptuous in cherishing the belief, that my arduous struggle has won for me the honourable reward of—public approval.”

No play could have been more appropriately timed for the particular occasion on which it was brought forward, than “Henry the Fifth,”—the only historical drama in the English series, excepting the second part of “Henry the Fourth,” as yet unrepresented at the Princess's. The great grandson of Edward the Third was the most popular monarch that ever swayed the sceptre of England in by-gone days. His short reign may be looked back on with unmingled satisfaction, as an epoch of glory, accompanied only by the one regret that he should have been so prematurely cut off. How

differently would English history have been written, had Henry, with his chief princes and nobles been slain, or made captive, as the chances were twenty to one against them that they would, on the memorable field of Agincourt. And again, had he not been suddenly removed in the full bloom of his fame and manhood, leaving the throne to an infant heir, in all human probability, the devastating quarrels of York and Lancaster would never have filled our annals with their sanguinary details. The records of that warlike age, the campaigns in France, make the hearts of Englishmen swell; and are well recalled at a time when a restless neighbour, armed to the teeth, is evidently in search of an antagonist, anywhere, on any pretext; and when constant alarms warn us to be on our guard, and prepared in case of unprovoked attack. The remembrance of past heroism is a wholesome spur to national pride, a sound guarantee for the future.

“Henry the Fifth” contains no female part of importance. The play is full of bustle and animation, of variety and excitement; but, the interest turns on war and politics, almost to the entire exclusion of domestic feelings and relations. Here was an objection at once, but for the happy thought of individualizing the Chorus as the Muse of History, and of thus securing the exalted talent of Mrs. C. Kean, for the delivery of some of the most impressive poetry of description that Shakespeare ever penned. In other plays, the “Winter’s Tale,” and “Pericles,” for instances, Shakespeare has specifically named *Time*, and the old poet *Gower*, as the representatives of this explanatory introduction to each act. In Garrick’s day, for some unknown reason, he declined the part of “King Harry,” but considered the Chorus worthy of his elocutionary powers. He spoke the speeches as Mr. Garrick, arrayed in the costume of

the day, a full dress court suit, with powdered bag wig, ruffles and sword. When "Henry the Fifth" was last revived at Covent Garden, in 1839, we had the symbolical "Chorus," under the guise of an aged man, with the traditionary appurtenances. By the present substitution, as gracefully described in the preface, "an opportunity is afforded to Mrs. C. Kean, which the subject does not otherwise supply, of appearing in this, the concluding revival of her husband's management." In the early editions of the play, this Chorus is simply called a prologue; and a prologue in effect it is, describing and connecting the quick succession of events, the rapid changes of locality; and elucidating passages which might otherwise appear confused or incongruous. But, chorus, or prologue, or interpreter, or by whatever name the mystical creation is to be designated, never until now has its importance been so thoroughly felt and understood. In the person of Mrs. C. Kean it forms the presiding charm, the key-note, if we may use the term, of the entire play. Her appearance, action, and utterance, present a combined picture of classic grace, and poetical inspiration. She might have stood to any sculptor, ancient or modern, for a statue of the Clio she so magnificently impersonates.

It was expected, and with good reason, that Mr. Kean would light on a play (as yet unrepresented) for his last great effort, that might enable him not only to concentrate all the resources of his judgment and experience, but affording at the same time a field for new effects and untried experiments. He had given festivals, masquerades, processions, and dances, ancient and modern; mythological tableaux and supernatural appearances, unimagined and unattempted by the most gifted of his predecessors. He had also dealt largely with the "pomp and circumstance of

war," in "Macbeth," "King John," and "Richard the Third." "Henry the Fifth," in addition to a great conflict crowned by a splendid victory, includes a siege, and the storming of a beleaguered fortress. Mr. Kean seized the novelty with the strong grasp of an original mind, and transferred to his small stage a representation of the most terrible of military feats in a manner that no description can even faintly convey an idea of, and which required to be seen again and again before all its wonders could be understood or appreciated. The assault on Harfleur, which opens the third act; the desperate resistance of the French garrison; the close conflict on the ramparts; the practice of the rude artillery of the day, with the advance of other besieging engines; and the final entry of the victorious assailants through the breach,—formed altogether the most marvellous realization of war, in its deadliest phase, that imitative art has ever attempted. The marvel is increased by the smallness of the space within which such numbers of men and so much complicated machinery are marshalled, together with the organization of the entire scene. Every supernumerary acted with the intelligence of a trained artist, and every movement appeared as natural as if dictated to each separate individual by the impulse of the moment. Making due allowance for the scale of action, the difference of weapons, equipments, and the absence of defensive armour,—the storming of the breach at Harfleur, as transferred to the boards of the Princess's Theatre, vividly embodied the carrying of the Malakoff, as we have heard it described, and figure it in our imagination, from pictures and recitals.

From Harfleur, the action of the play carries us rapidly on to Agincourt, the Waterloo of the middle ages; a field which decided for a time the long rivalry between France and England, and entirely to the

advantage of the latter. Shakespeare in his glowing scenes has followed the incidents of this great campaign as he found them described in the Chronicles of Holinshed, adorning them with the magic of his own genius. Mr. C. Kean has invested Shakespeare with the living identity he intended to represent, and may have dreamed of as his thoughts looked onwards to futurity, but which in the infancy of stage resources, and with an uneducated public, he never could have hoped to witness in his own days.

The third and fourth acts comprise the most interesting portion of the play. Again our wonder is called forth by the skill with which the English army is manœuvred and brought into battle, and by the extent of the masses employed. The march from their own ground of encampment to the attack on the French host;—the firm tread and demeanour of men resolved to conquer or die, roused from momentary despondency, and almost maddened by the inspiring address of their king and leader, so gallantly delivered by Mr. Kean;—the general excitement and stirring reality, so unlike stage deception, and so closely embodying truth;—all these animated delusions bewilder the faculties of sight and hearing, and enforce on the spectators a conviction that they are looking on the very men who fought and won that glorious field. We are carried back to the actual time and place, until we feel as if really participating in, and present at the events thus surprisingly reproduced in the theatric microcosm, so faithfully reflecting the world of four hundred and forty years anterior to that of the day in which we live and move.

When King Henry returned to his own capital crowned with the laurels of Agincourt, the citizens of London prepared for him a reception which, in splendour and imposing pomp, cast into shadow the Pagan

triumphs of the Roman Cæsars, while it far exceeded them in heart-felt gratulation. Ever beloved by his people, Henry was now their idol. Shakespeare speaks of this pageant through the mouth of the Chorus, but, of necessity passes over the scene. Mr. Kean has introduced it in an episode of action, carefully following the account of an eye-witness, whose MS. has been preserved, and is referred to in the preface to the printed edition of the play as now acted. The locality is supposed to be old London Bridge, from the Surrey side of the river. The success of a somewhat similar episode in "Richard the Second," undoubtedly suggested the idea, but the mode in which the later introduction is carried out, is totally different, and far more elaborate, as well as superior in the interest of the situation and the character of the incidents. In "Richard the Second," we had the entry of a successful usurper, clouded by the presence of his deposed and lawful monarch. In "Henry the Fifth" we have the triumph of a popular sovereign, unmingled with painful associations. The arrangement of this scene may be quoted as another wonderful instance of the fertility of Mr. Kean's mind, and of the unremitting research he bestows on the immediate subject of his illustration. The action ends here, with the exception of the betrothal of King Henry to the Princess Katharine, in the cathedral of Troyes, which winds up the whole in graceful repose. The play occupied nearly four hours. No prelude or afterpiece was acted with it at first, but the attention of the audience never wearied for a moment; they were manifestly so absorbed in the one subject, that the introduction of any other would have been an interruption and not a relief.

There are no fewer than thirty-seven speaking characters in "Henry the Fifth," but they are all of

minor importance, the acting strength being almost exclusively concentrated in the *King*, who is seldom absent from the scene. It is not easy to decide as to what section of the drama this amiable and popular hero belongs. He has a vein of comic humour which reminds us of the constitutional pleasantry of Prince Hal, restrained and chastened by the dignity and responsibility of his royal duties. The part does not embrace the madness of *Lear*, the conscience-stricken agony of *Macbeth*, the frenzied jealousy of *Othello*, or the profoundly meditative philosophy of *Hamlet*; but it requires, nevertheless, an actor of great and varied power to supply an adequate representative. All the great tragedians of the day, from John Kemble to Charles Kean, have included it in their cast, although with very unequal success. It requires the versatility denied to some, but in which our present representative so eminently excels. The power and martial bearing of the character lie principally in the third and fourth acts. The reflections on sovereign power, and its hard conditions, suggested to Henry by his midnight walk through the camp on the eve of Agincourt, were delivered by Mr. Kean with deeply impressive feeling. This soliloquy, and his supplication to the "God of battles," are contrasted in a masterly style with the fiery, unstudied energy of his harangue before he leads his army to the charge. The thorough comprehension of the different points in Shakespeare's delineation of his own especial hero, were also marked with great care by Mr. Kean in the frankness of his manner when conversing with *Fluellen*; in his dialogue with the soldiers, *Williams* and *Bates*; and in the military freedom and gallantry of his courtship in the last scene. Such a dramatic treat as Mr. Kean's revived "Henry the Fifth," has never before been offered to the public, and

will stand alone in all future histories of the English stage. We may say, without exaggeration, that all London flocked to see it, and all England crowded to London for the same purpose. When the curtain fell on the last night of its performance, every one felt that it would never rise again on a Shakespearean exhibition of similar excellence. The entire outlay exceeded 3000*l*. The bill for the rehearsals of the supernumeraries alone, amounted to 160*l*., including their refreshments. Mr. Kean was so well satisfied with their attention to his instructions, and the intelligence they exhibited in catching the spirit of the scenes when explained to them, that he doubled the pay of all on the first night, and distributed above one hundred pounds more in specific gratuities.

In the first act of "Henry the Fifth," Shakespeare gives a farewell reminiscence of *Falstaff*, in the description of his death, by *Mrs. Quickly*. Of his followers, *Pistol* retains some degree of prominence, but *Nym* and *Bardolph* are mere cyphers, and the latter is hanged for sacrilege. A subject so popular as "Henry the Fifth," has occupied pens of far inferior inspiration to that of Shakespeare. Neither the date nor the author of the anonymous drama which preceded his, have been ascertained. A reprint of it is to be found in a collection of six plays, edited by Nichols, and published in 1779. The two volumes occasionally occur in a sale catalogue, and are curious to the Shakespearean collector. In 1664, another "Henry the Fifth," by the Earl of Orrerey, was acted at the Duke of York's Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. Downes (*Roscius Anglicanus*) says it was excellently performed, and acted ten days in succession. It is written in rhyme, and has not the least resemblance to Shakespeare's, except in the historical portion. *Owen Tudor* and the *King* are

represented as sworn friends, and are both in love with the *Princess Katharine*. The love scenes are absurd to the last degree. The characters were most splendidly attired, particularly *King Henry*, *Owen Tudor*, and the *Duke of Burgundy*, who wore the coronation suits of King Charles II., the Duke of York, and the Earl of Oxford. The actors who performed them were Harris, Betterton, and Smith. It was said to have been in the part of *Owen Tudor* that Betterton laid the foundation of the great celebrity he afterwards acquired.

In 1723, Aaron Hill produced an alteration of "Henry the Fifth," which was acted at Drury Lane for four nights. Many of the incidents, and much of the language, are borrowed from Shakespeare; but a second plot is introduced by the addition of a new female character, *Harriet*, as she is called, a niece of *Lord Scroope*, who has been formerly seduced by the *King*. She appears in men's clothes throughout, and is made the means of discovering the conspiracy against *Henry*. Mr. Hill, with a liberality or enthusiasm little known or practised by authors of more recent days, presented the managers of the theatre with sets of scenes for this drama, which cost him 200*l*.

Shakespeare, in the comic relief of his play, has aimed at national dialects as understood in his age. He has given us a Welshman, *Fluellen*; an Irishman, *Macmorris*; a Scotchman, *Jamy*; and a Frenchman, *Monsieur le Fer*. With the exception of the former they have always been omitted, and we may say without detriment, in the acting versions. *Fluellen* is well conceived, and an amusing introduction. In Jones's "History of Brecknockshire," we find the following passage, tending to connect this imaginary personage with the historical David Gam. who so gallantly sacrificed himself at Agincourt to save his king.

“In consequence of an affray in the High Street of Brecknock, in which David (Gam) unfortunately killed his kinsman, Ritsiart fawr o’r Slwch, he was compelled to fly into England; and, to avoid a threatened prosecution for the murder, attached himself to the Lancastrian party, to whose interest he ever after most faithfully adhered. There can be little doubt that Shakespeare in his burlesque character of *Fluellen*, intended David Gam; though for obvious reasons, as his descendants were then well known and respected in the English court, he chose to disguise the name. I have called *Fluellen* a burlesque character, because his ‘pribbles and prabbles’ sound ludicrously to an English as well as to a Welsh ear. Yet, after all, Llewellyn is a brave soldier, and an honest fellow; he is admitted into a considerable degree of intimacy with the king, and stands high in his good opinion, which is strong presumptive proof, notwithstanding Shakespeare, the better to conceal his object, describes the death of Sir David Gam, yet that he intended David Llewellyn by this portrait of the testy Welchman; for there was no other person of that country in the English army who could have been supposed to have been on such terms of familiarity with the king. It must also be observed that Llewellyn was the name by which he was known in the army, and not Gam, or Squinting, by which epithet, though it was afterwards assumed by his family, he would probably have knocked down any man who dared to address him. By his behaviour on this memorable day, he, in some measure, made amends for a life of violence and rapine, and raised his posterity to riches and respect. But, alas! how weak, how idle is family pride, how unstable worldly wealth! At different periods, between the years 1550, and 1700, I have found these descendants of this hero of Agincourt (who

lived like a wolf and died like a lion), in possession of every acre of ground in the county of Brecon; at the commencement of the eighteenth century, I find one of them the common bellman of the town of Brecknock; and before the conclusion, two others supported by the inhabitants of the parish where they resided, and even the name of Games, in the legitimate line, extinct."

A small section of the clergy still continue, from time to time, on the old ground of exploded fallacies, the worn-out topic of *abuse*, to preach against the stage. As usual, the advocates of the theatre reply, and a hot controversy ensues, in which temper and argument are frequently lost together, with more of scandal than profit to either side. A more conclusive answer may be found in the number of divines, who, throughout Mr. Kean's management, might be seen, at all the Shakespearean revivals, in the stalls and boxes of the Princess's Theatre. During the run of "Henry the Fifth," the following letter was addressed to him by the incumbent of a rectory in the country:—

" May 3, 1859.

" MY DEAR SIR,

" Had not a friend unexpectedly come to see me last evening, I should have written to you, apologizing for the apparently rude way in which I sent my card to you behind the scenes on Friday, after the performance had commenced. Your kind letter received this morning, has quite set my mind at rest as to the manner in which you received it. My coming to town at all was a sudden freak, carried out on the spur of the moment. I wished to give my boys, who were with me, an Easter holiday. I was particularly anxious to see "Henry the Fifth;" and on Friday morning there was a sudden calm after some rough

winds, which looked tempting enough for a sea trip. Hence it was that we only arrived in London in time to get to the Princess's at seven o'clock, and found all the stalls engaged, and seemingly, the entire house crammed. Rather than go so far on a fool's errand, after raising the boys' expectations so high, I scratched a hasty message to yourself, to see if you could help me out of the difficulty, and immediately after this, the boxkeeper found me a couple of seats, into which we all three managed to pack ourselves, and sat very comfortably indeed throughout. I was far more than *gratified*; I would not have missed the representation for anything; I was delighted—carried away. Since I returned home, I have read through "Henry Fifth" again, and wondered that I had not seen so many beauties in it before. For such a lesson in elocution, I and the five or six other clergymen I saw around me, ought to be properly grateful to you. One of the persons, by the bye, was my old tutor at Exeter College, whom I had not seen since 1845. He is now, I believe, a very energetic "via media" man, with a strong bias to "Evangelicalism." He seemed, however, to be thoroughly rapt by the splendour of the ecclesiastical ceremonial you set before us. So modestly chaste, and so simply grand in outward pomp and in exquisite music, that I do not believe even Lord ——— himself could have been offended at it. It was, in fact, too real to offend the most delicate religious susceptibility. There was nothing sham to strike either ear or eye; and so the touching nature of the various incidents connected with *Henry's* invasion of France appealed straight to our hearts. I can assure you that our attention and interest remained in the same unflagged condition of excitement into which they had been worked by the opening scenes.

"I should much like to know when the period of your management closes, because a large party of us intend to come up on purpose; and yet, if possible, we want to put off our coming until July. With my kind regards and compliments to Mrs. Kean, in which all my family will gladly join. when I apprise them of my having written, and to yourself also,

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Very sincerely yours,

"—— ———."

The attraction of "Henry the Fifth" superseded the necessity of an Easter novelty; but on Whit Monday, the play, which until then had stood alone in the bills, was followed by a new Comedietta, in one act, written by Messrs. Yates and Harrington. It was called "If the Cap Fits," and met with a most favourable reception, being repeated for nearly fifty nights. We know not whether this amusing trifle is of French origin, or entirely original. The dialogue is smartly written, with point and humour, showing that the authors are well practised in one leading essential of dramatic composition. The characters are ingeniously contrasted, and were impersonated with due spirit by Miss Murray, Miss Bufton, Mr. W. Lacy, Mr. Everett, and Mr. F. Matthews.

On Saturday, July the 9th. "Henry the Fifth" was acted for the eighty-fourth time, and finally withdrawn after that evening.* During the last nights the houses were crowded to excess. The aggregate receipts went far beyond those of its most successful Shakespearian predecessors. The run of the play did not terminate because its popularity was on the wane, but from a

* At Covent Garden, in 1839, under Mr. Macready's management, Henry the Fifth was acted twenty-one nights; not consecutively, but on alternative evenings with Richelieu, the Stranger, As You like it, the Winter's Tale, and the Lady of Lyons.

desire on Mr. Kean's part to gratify his patrons with variety, as the concluding weeks of his management approached. "Henry the Eighth," which had been repeatedly asked for, was produced on Monday, July the 11th. A lapse of four years had occasioned no changes of importance in the distribution of the principal characters. All the great scenic effects were restored with their former splendour and historical accuracy. The acting of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean, as *Cardinal Wolsey* and the *Queen*, presented, if possible, more finished exhibitions of two of Shakespeare's most elaborate portraits, than those with which they had delighted one hundred successive audiences in 1855. Our details in a preceding chapter render repetition here unnecessary.

The season now approached its termination; but, before the last night was announced. Mr. Kean received one of the most flattering tributes ever bestowed by public opinion on distinguished ability and services. His old Etonian companions came forward, spontaneously, to proclaim to the world that the first actor of the day had been educated amongst them, and was one of themselves. Through the following graceful announcement, they invited the people of England to join them in a common tribute to one whose private and professional life reflected honour on the seminary to which they all belonged, and had been so perseveringly devoted to the elevation of a noble art.

"Proposed PUBLIC BANQUET and TESTIMONIAL to CHARLES KEAN, F.S.A., at St. James's Hall, on Wednesday, July 20, 1859.

THE EARL OF CARLISLE IN THE CHAIR.

"A number of noblemen and gentlemen, educated at Eton, nearly all of them contemporary with Mr. Charles Kean, have formed themselves into a Committee for the

purpose of inviting their old schoolfellow to a banquet, on the occasion of his retiring from the management of the Princess's Theatre, and of presenting him with a testimonial to mark their sense of his distinguished talent.

"The Committee, further considering that the right of acknowledging Mr. Kean's services belongs to the nation at large, are anxious that the public should unite with them in testifying their admiration for one who has so long and so successfully laboured to provide for their intellectual enjoyment, and who has done so much towards upholding the dignity and high character of the national stage.

"All communications to be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Thomas Henry Taunton, Esq., at Mr. Sams' Royal Library, 1, St. James's Street.

COMMITTEE.

His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.	Right Hon. W. E Gladstone, M.P.
His Grace the Duke of Rutland.	Right Hon. Spencer Walpole, M.P.
Most Hon. the Marquis of Londonderry.	Gen. Sir J. Burgoyne, Bart. G.C.B.
Right Hon. the Earl of Carlisle.	Sir Walter Minto Farquhar, Bt. M.P.
Right Hon. the Earl of Eglintoun.	Sir Frederick Rogers, Bart.
Right Hon. the Earl of Craven.	Col. Clifford, M. P.
Right Hon. the Earl of Dunraven.	C. J. Selwyn, Esq. M.P.
Right Hon. the Earl of Norbury.	Sir John Duntze, Bart.
Right Hon. the Earl of Sandwich.	Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, Bart.
Right Hon. the Earl of Selkirk.	Mr. Serjeant Kinglake, M. P.
Right Hon. the Earl of Chesterfield.	William Vansittart, Esq. M.P.
Right Hon. the Viscount Pollington.	Thomas E. Moss, Esq. of Liverpool.
Right Hon. the Viscount Exmouth.	Thomas Phinn, Esq. Q. C.
Right Hon. the Viscount Chelsea.	Walker Skirrow, Jun. Esq.
Rt. Hon. the Lord J. Manners, M.P.	William Platt, Esq.
The Lord Macdonald.	W. C. Long, Esq.
The Lord Ernest Bruce, M.P.	P. L. Powys, Esq. M.P.
The Lord Lindsay.	Lewis Loyd, Esq.
The Lord John Scott.	Charles Goding, Esq.
Col. the Hon. Augustus Liddell.	Charles Edward Johnston, Esq.
Col. the Hon. J. S. Lindsay, M.P.	Rev. R. Lewis Browne.
Col. De Bathe.	James Robert Hope Scott, Esq.
Major Blake.	D.C.L. and Q.C.
The Hon. William Cowper, M.P.	Lieut.-Col. M. Bruce.
	T. H. Taunton, Esq. <i>Hon. Sec.</i>

These advertisements had no sooner appeared, than many of the leading journals teemed with approving paragraphs, indicating the general interest excited by the subject. We select some passages from an article in a paper of extensive circulation, and much weight as a critical authority,* which condenses the chief points in a tone of clear reasoning and just compliment.

“To Mr. Charles Kean belongs the singular merit of distinguishing himself as the enthusiastic supporter of a sinking cause, and of delaying the final doom of the drama by his own individual force. From the aspect of the theatrical horizon we have no right to augur that any successor will arise to continue his work. On the contrary, we are assured that the next director of the Princess’s Theatre will devote it to plays of the Porte Saint Martin school; and we cannot point to any other establishment in central London, which any living manager would dream of consecrating unreservedly to the *manes* of Shakespeare.

“Looking at the struggles of Mr. Kean,—at the labour of mind and body, for which no treasury could compensate,—we are inclined to compare him to those patriots of the latter days of Greek independence, whose names, less familiar than others who flourished in the days of Marathon and Thermopylæ, come down to us surrounded by a tragic halo, and claim an especial respect from the very circumstance that they could only procrastinate, and could not prevent, the ruin of their country—the heroes of the Achæan League. David Garrick, when he revived a love of Shakespeare, had the pleasure of awakening a new sensation; and the Kembles and the elder Kean maintained the tragic drama while its attractive powers were at their height; but in Mr. Charles Kean we have the aspect of a zealot

* See the “Saturday Review,” of June 18th, 1859.

contending against the tide of fashion,—fighting against the deadliest of adversaries, namely, weary indifference,—availing himself of expedient after expedient to carry out the grand purpose of his life, without even the hearty encouragement of those who ought to have sympathized with his honest and well-directed endeavours. To force the sight-hunters into Shakespearean worship, he brought spectacle to a perfection little short of miraculous; but by this very method he offended a number of literary *dilettanti*, who, with monstrous assurance, and in defiance of all the teachings of experience, tried to make out a case in favour of shabby scenery. In vain did Mr. Kean explain, by an address in his play-bills, that his scenery and dresses were replete with historical instruction. The most miserable scribblers of burlesque thought it comic to turn the addresses themselves into ridicule, and were rewarded by the laughter of many who ought to have known better. But the great artist gave the best possible answer to his vituperators. He did not rub a particle of gold from his scenes, or dismiss a man from his band of supernumeraries, when they could be of service; but he relied more and more on his genius as an actor; and the toils of one entire season were expended to prove that, notwithstanding all the cant about smothering Shakespeare with finery, nobody was more deeply impressed with the necessity of subordinating accessories to principals than the great actor himself. The characters which he successively played at the commencement of the present (his ‘farewell’) season, one after the other, imbued the public with the conviction that a tragedian, unrivalled beyond the thought of competition, was about to leave them.

“And by whom has Mr. Kean been really supported throughout his honourable but toilsome career? Not by any class or clique; not by the aristocracy; not by

the cultivators of light literature ; not by a fashionable coterie : but by that substantial, undefinable public that takes in all these, but yet is influenced by none ; that public of which no one can discover individual representatives ; which expresses itself mass-wise, and which, deaf to the voice of intrigue and party criticism, is quick to appreciate the deserts of those who really work well for its edification or amusement. In the eyes of the public, Mr. Kean has ever been the great actor ; the public have acknowledged the beauty and historic worth of his decorations. It is only at the end of his career that his schoolfellows, the Etonians, make their appearance. They find him famous, and they honour the independent exertions by which the fame has been acquired."

During the interval that elapsed between the announcement and celebration of the festival, Mr. Kean received a host of congratulatory letters from personal friends and professional admirers, many of whom were total strangers. Amongst the latter communications, few were more gratifying than the one we here subjoin, to which a double interest is attached, arising from the feelings avowed, and the position of the writer as a member of the clerical profession.

" MY DEAR SIR,—

" June 29.

" I once took the liberty, I fear a very unauthorized one, of writing to you ; and I got so pleasant an answer, that I venture to repeat the impertinence. Living, as I do, two hundred miles from London, it is no wonder that I have only just seen that a public dinner is to be given to you on the 20th of July, and a testimonial is also to be presented. I am so very poor that I cannot afford to add to the testimonial, much less to make a journey to London. But this makes me the

more anxious to express to you, by letter, the unfeigned respect I feel for you, and the great pleasure it would give me to be able to join in any mode of testifying my sense of your admirable conduct in a profession which is surrounded by no small difficulties in the way of a man's duty.

"It would give me particular pleasure, *as a clergyman*, to attend your dinner (as I attended Mr. Macready's farewell dinner); because I have a special abhorrence of the cant which pretends that it is improper for a clergyman to see a play. I believe that I have enjoyed as pure pleasure, as refined and as sweet, as I am capable of enjoying, in a theatre.

"I should have liked, also, as an old Eton master, who have acted with Lord Carlisle at the Datchet Lane Theatre, to have expressed, by my presence, my gratification at finding that Eton can fit a man *for anything*.

"Wishing you all possible prosperity and happiness,

"Believe me,

"Yours most sincerely,

"—— ———."

CHAPTER XVII.

BANQUET AND TESTIMONIAL TO CHARLES KEAN AT THE ST. JAMES'S HALL, ON THE 20TH JULY, 1859—THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE IN THE CHAIR—SPEECHES ON THAT OCCASION—REVIVAL OF THE WIFE'S SECRET—THE SEASON CLOSES ON THE 29TH OF AUGUST, WITH HENRY THE EIGHTH—MR. C. KEAN'S FAREWELL ADDRESS—CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

THE Dinner took place, as arranged, at St. James's Hall, Regent-street, on Wednesday, the 20th of July. An intermediate change of Ministry having called the Earl of Carlisle, who was to have presided, to Ireland, to resume the office of Viceroy,—in his unavoidable absence the chair was most ably filled by his Grace the Duke of Newcastle.* He entered the banquet room a little after seven o'clock, and took his seat on a raised dais running along the breadth of the Hall, having on his right the guest of the evening, and on his left the Right Honorable W. E. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the height of parliamentary business, these two distinguished statesmen found time to honour the occasion by their personal attendance. Amongst the committee who sat down at the cross table were Viscount Exmouth; Lord John Manners, M.P.; Lord Ernest Bruce, M.P.; Lord Robert Clinton; Colonel the Hon. James Lindsay, M.P.; the Right Hon. Spencer Walpole, M.P.; General Sir John Burgoyne, G.C.B.; Sir Walter Minto Farquhar, Bart., M.P.; Sir Walter Stirling, Bart.; C. H. Selwyn, Esq., M.P.;

* It is a remarkable incident that Lord Carlisle was thus, by the interference of political duty, prevented for the second time from presiding at a banquet given in honour of Mr. C. Kean. A similar difficulty presented itself in 1838.

Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, Bart.; Mr. Serjeant Kinglake, M.P.; W. Vansittart, Esq., M.P.; Thos. E. Moss, of Liverpool, Esq.; W. Platt, Esq.; W. C. Long, Esq.; P. L. Powys, Esq., M.P.; Lewis Loyd, Esq.; Chas. E. Johnston, Esq.; the Rev. R. Lewis Browne; Lieut.-Colonel M. Bruce; Sir Erskine Perry, M.P.; Sir J. Johnstone, M.P.; Beresford Hope, Esq., M.P.; and T. H. Taunton, Esq., honorary secretary. In the general company, amounting to five hundred and fifty (the full number the Hall would contain), were Mr. W. M. Thackeray; Mr. Clarkson Stanfield; Mr. David Roberts; Mr. Sims Reeves; Mr. John Timbs, F.S.A.; Mr. Godwin, F.S.A.; Mr. Donne; Mr. Lovell, and many other distinguished representatives of literature, law, the fine arts, and the drama. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were respectively represented by their members. Behind the Chairman was placed a marble bust of Mr. C. Kean, by Bailey. The entertainment was graced by the presence of nearly four hundred ladies in the galleries, who gave an unwonted brilliancy and animation to the scene. Mrs. Charles Kean entered the balcony during the dinner, and was received with enthusiastic and long-continued plaudits, which she acknowledged with much grace and feeling.

The dinner being over, and "Non nobis Domine" having been sung by the choir of Eton College,

The noble CHAIRMAN proposed "The Queen," which was responded to with the customary enthusiasm, and followed by the "National Anthem."

The next toast was "The Prince Consort, Prince of Wales, and the rest of the Royal Family." The CHAIRMAN, in proposing it, expressed a hope that the Prince of Wales, in his next tour, would pay a visit to some of the great colonies of England. (Loud cheers.)

He also spoke in terms of high eulogy of the Duke of Cambridge, who, he said, was devoting the whole of his energies to the reorganisation of the British army.

The toast was drunk with the utmost cordiality.

Then followed "The Army and Navy," to which General Sir J. BURGOYNE replied.

The CHAIRMAN again rose and said: "Gentlemen, I now approach a theme for which I unfeignedly say I feel myself incompetent—a task from which many a man, better fitted than I am, might well, not to his discredit, shrink; a task which I do not hesitate to say I deeply regret has not fallen to the lot of him who was originally intended to perform it (the Earl of Carlisle). Allow me, before proposing this toast, to say a word with reference to the origin of the present banquet. You, or at least many of you, know that every son of Eton looks back with feelings of the tenderest affection to the school in which he was brought up. Many of you who were not educated at Eton may know that there is a freemasonry amongst us which draws us together under whatever circumstances, and in whatever quarter of the world we may be thrown. (Hear, hear.) Well, then, we, Etonians, contemporaries of Charles Kean (cheers), felt that whilst we enrolled in our archives the names of some of the most distinguished men which this country has produced (hear, hear)—generals, statesmen, philosophers, poets, and others, we had now a son of Eton who had brought fresh lustre on the school to which we belonged, and of him therefore we were anxious to prove our admiration. ("Hear, hear," cheers, and a cry of "Bravo.") But we felt at the same time that in such a demonstration it was the right of all to join. (Cheers.) We, Etonians, initiated it, but we felt that it was proper to call upon you to participate in it. (Hear, hear.) We felt that the fame

of Charles Kean is the property of all; nurtured it was at Eton, but it has grown with his growth, and is now the property of his age and of his country; and therefore we have invited you all to meet at this banquet and to join in that testimonial which is to be the consequence of it. (Cheers.) It would occupy too long if I were to attempt to give to you anything like a biography of our guest, but I may be pardoned if in this assembly, initiated by Etonians, I mention that it is now thirty-five years ago since he and I, and many others at this table, were first associated together in that school. (Hear, hear.) That as a scholar he was distinguished you may judge from what you have seen of him in after life. (Hear, hear.) That as a boy he was popular I may appeal to the friends who are assembled around me at this table. ("Hear, hear," and great cheering.) But that he was no book worm merely, I may prove by the fact, that whilst the honorary secretary of this testimonial was the captain of the boats, he was the second captain, and pulled the stroke in a match of six; and it is a curious fact that four out of those six are at the present moment in this room. (Hear, and cheers.) Nay, such was his prowess, and such was the honest rivalry, which in that day as in most others, produces friendship, that he and the honorary secretary pulled the rival tens, and I believe it was a drawn match; at any rate, it was celebrated by a breakfast of the joint crews at the "Christopher." (Cheers.) In the very year that he left Eton he entered upon the stage. It would be impertinence in me to refer to the circumstances which induced that step, but I may mention as an additional element of credit to that career that his education had not tended to any such course. I believe that in six years from that time he performed on the boards of Covent-garden for the last time with his

distinguished father who died shortly after. (Great applause.) And upon that occasion he also acted with another—with Miss Ellen Tree—(cheers, the whole of the company standing up and waving handkerchiefs and hands to Mrs. Kean, who was in the gallery)—with her who has been the partaker of all his labours and all his glories, and who is now the happy participator in the honours which are thrust upon him. (“Hear, hear,” and cheers.) Gentlemen, it would be absurd in me, even if I were not too long encroaching upon your time, (cries of “No, no”) to attempt anything like a description of the state of the Stage when Charles Kean entered upon it; but I may allude to this fact, that for some time before, there had been a complete severance of dramatic poetry from the theatre; and whilst dramatic poetry occupied the highest position in the imaginative literature of this country, whilst every body delighted in the poetry of the Elizabethan era in the closet, Shakespeare was excluded, or nearly so, from those boards upon which it had been his purpose and delight to introduce the most beautiful conceptions of his genius. (Cheers.) To avoid this evil, and to introduce a reform in such a matter has been the object of Mr. Kean’s life. Gentlemen, in the days of ancient Greece, the theatre and the drama were the most effective instruments in forming the character of that remarkable nation; and if it is not the same at this moment, it is at any rate an index to the social status of a people, and we may trace in succession the feelings, and sentiments, and moral opinions of this country if we look back to the coarseness of language—and coarseness, I believe, of language alone—which prevailed in the age of the Tudors, degenerating into actual obscenity, and, what is worse, profligacy of thought and sentiment in the reign of Charles the Second, followed up by the frivolity of

subsequent times. We shall see, I believe, now, if not a complete revival of what we would earnestly wish to see, at any rate we shall find a material improvement in the tastes and sentiments of the present day. (Hear, hear.) I have referred to ancient Greece. In Greece the actors of that country were considered worthy of the highest honours of the State; and it is strange, indeed, that, in this land of literature and art, whilst other followers of art, whilst sculptors, painters, poets, receive, at any rate, some portion and meed of praise, of approbation, and of respect, and, so far from grudging it them, I say they do not receive so much as they ought—(cries of “Bravo,” and cheers)—I say that it is strange that while they, at any rate, receive some honour, that branch of art the most rare, the most difficult in which to arrive at excellence, seems to have been cast into the shade, and treated almost with obloquy;—at any rate, with indifference. (Hear, hear.) Honour. I then say, to the man who has raised the stage from what it was when he entered upon it to what it is now. I do not mean to say that he found it in such a low state as I have represented it to have been in former days, but he has raised it materially; and he has introduced reforms, begun by the great Garriek, followed up by the two Kembles and his own father, and now matured, and improved, and increased by himself. (Applause.) I allude, of course, to what have been called his Shakespearean revivals. We all know their merits; we have heard them criticized; but they have outlived criticism. (Hear, hear.) But his fame does not rest alone, however greatly a portion of it may, upon these Shakespearean revivals. He has shown a versatility in his art; he has shown a knowledge of the human character; he has shown the influence of mind over the passions of men; he has

shown all these qualities in a way which proves that he is no copyist, that he is not a mannerist, that he is not a man with one idea only. (Cheers.) Moreover, he is a great historical painter. I see some distinguished professors of the art of painting in this room, and I ask them whether they do not look upon Mr. Kean as a rival in the art, only that their productions, happily for them, descend, fresh as they came from their easels, to posterity; his, unhappily for him, perish in the same evening, and leave nothing but their fame behind them? (Hear, hear.) His sceneries are not only lessons in art, but they are lessons in history. (Hear, hear.) We have become, of late years, many of us, attached to archæology. I look upon Mr. Kean as one of the greatest archæologists of the day. (Hear, hear.) He has had a reason for everything; there is nothing which he introduces upon the stage for which he has not authority, and you may see living representations of Shakespeare's characters, with the exact costume, the exact scenery, the exact furniture of the rooms which, there is every reason to believe, from pictures and other sources, existed at the time Shakespeare represented. But he has done more; he has introduced groups upon the stage which approach to a marvel in merit; the way he has organized them, the way he has dealt with them, the way he has brought them upon the stage, moved them, and, when they have played their part, removed them—would be worthy of any general in the service. ("Hear, hear," cheers, and laughter.) He has, in acting Shakespeare, answered the question of Shakespeare himself—

"Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France?"

and Mr. Kean has proved that his cockpit could; and if it were said that it could be done in any but his

theatre, it would be believed to be impossible. Well, but in what spirit has this been entered upon? It has been in no commercial spirit. (Cheers.) Not neglecting the interests of his family—and we should all have less respect for him if he did (hear, hear)—I say, not neglecting the interests of his family, he has nevertheless been actuated by a pure love of art, by a love of his profession, by a noble spirit. (Hear, hear.) He no doubt feels the truth of the lines,—

“The drama’s laws the drama’s patrons give,

“For those who live to please must please to live.”

We acknowledge that sentiment; he has not been improperly influenced by it; he has never allowed the love of gain to induce him to swerve for one moment from that clear line of duty, I may call it, which he has chalked out for himself; he has followed his career regardless of every selfish consideration (hear, hear), and I am certain he now has his reward in the approval and admiration of his friends and the public. (Cheers.) At the same time, his hand has ever been open to assist the poor and needy, (hear, hear,) more especially if they have belonged to his own profession. I need only recal to you the meeting in the Princess’s Theatre about twelve months ago, when he eloquently advocated the cause of the Dramatic College (a voice, “What has become of it now?”), and proved that not only was his eloquence at the service of this charity, but that his purse was ready too. (Hear, hear.) Now then, gentlemen, as our guest has to follow me, I should indeed stand unjustifiable before you if I said one word more in advocating this testimonial. You know his public merits; many of you know his private virtues (“hear,” and cheers), and therefore I will only say that I now ask you to drink to the health of one whose virtues and

whose private character have brought around him a wide circle of affectionate and admiring friends;—to one whose zeal in his profession, amounting almost to enthusiasm, has led him to prove that, the theatre may be made, not merely the vehicle for frivolous amusement, or, what is worse, for dissipation, but that it may be erected into a gigantic instrument of education for the instruction of the young, and for the edification as well as amusement, of those of maturer age. (Cheers, which lasted some time.) I ask you to drink his health as one who has exalted the character of the English theatre; I ask you to drink his health as one whose benevolence and charity many down-trodden brothers and sisters of his art have felt and blessed (hear, hear); I ask you to drink his health as one who by his genius has illustrated, and by his character has elevated, the profession on which he has entered (applause): and, finally, I ask you to drink his health as one whom I may term, if figuratively, at any rate without exaggeration, as the hierarch of that glorious temple in which Shakespeare is enshrined.” (Loud and long-continued cheering, in the midst of which the noble chairman sat down.)

The toast was drunk by the company upstanding, amidst enthusiastic cheering and waving of handkerchiefs on the part of the ladies. Every point in this admirable speech told upon the listeners; and nothing more forcibly than the tone of personal kindness by which it was pervaded.

The general excitement having somewhat abated,

Mr. KEAN, on rising to return thanks, was rapturously applauded. He said—“My Lords and Gentlemen, when I entered this room and took my seat in presence of this distinguished company, as the invited guest of the evening, I felt and appreciated at its full value, and, I trust, with becoming pride, the flattering position to

which your favour has exalted me ; but it was impossible for me to anticipate the kind and gracious eulogiums of the noble chairman, so warmly and eloquently expressed, and your enthusiastic response, which I may truly say has completely overpowered me. (Cheers.) I am totally unable to thank you as I ought or as I wish. I throw myself on your indulgence, entreating you to believe in the sincerity of my feebly uttered sentiments, and to pardon the poverty of my language in consideration of the overflow of my heart. (Cheers.) Amongst the leading influences of human character the ties of kindred occupy a foremost rank ; next to these, perhaps, may be placed the associations of boyhood, the remembrance of those happy days, at school or college, when life “ first put forth the tender leaves of hope ; ” when all was spring and sunshine ; when our young minds were engrossed with the present, and the gathering clouds of the future were unseen or disregarded. (Sensation.) All these thronging visions of the past come back upon me at this moment, after the lapse of more than thirty years, with the freshness of yesterday, and with that pure enjoyment which only such revived feelings can impart, as I look upon many of the faces by which I am surrounded, and consider the originating impulse that gave rise to the present brilliant assemblage. (Cheers.) To be thus recognised and presented, as it were, anew to the public, as the fellow-student and early companion of men who have inherited or achieved the highest honours and the purest fame—men as universally esteemed for their talents, their integrity, and their benevolence, as for their exalted rank and social importance—(cheers);—such a crowning episode in the pilgrimage of life is surely more than enough to compensate for years of toil, and to obliterate for ever the memory of past struggles, anxieties, and disappointments. (Cheers.)

How, also, am I to find words in which to convey my sense of obligation to my unswerving patrons and supporters—the public; that public who have so frankly and generously responded to the present call, and whose co-operation was ever ready to promote what I conscientiously believed to be the blending of their most intellectual recreation with a true development of the best purposes of our national drama. Let me offer to their representatives here my heartfelt gratitude—

“ Only I have left to say
More is thy due than more than all can pay.”

You have done me a great honour—the greatest possible honour that could be conferred on a member of the theatrical profession, and, consequently, on the dramatic art itself;—that art, the progress and prosperity of which cannot be otherwise than a subject of interest to every reflecting and educated mind; for the legitimate object of the drama is to contribute to the intellectual culture of mankind—to expose to view the secret springs of action, the most minute vibrations of the human heart; to exhibit the character of man under all its various and conflicting passions; to inspire sentiments which may serve the purposes of truth and morality;—“ whose end,” as Shakespeare has told us, “ both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure.” (Cheers.) When these objects are not attained, the drama has not fulfilled its mission. It is not because the stage may be degraded from its higher purposes that its beneficial influence should be overlooked or rejected. (Cheers, and cries of “ Bravo ! ”) All human institutions must necessarily be defective in their organisation, as comprising

within themselves mingled elements of good and evil. Imperfect in their source, they cannot be otherwise than imperfect in their exercise. The effect depends upon the care with which these elements are regulated, and the utmost that can be hoped for is a preponderance of good. (Cheers.) Thus, in the natural world, we find plants possessing the contrasted ingredients of health and destruction. Shakespeare has described this in one of his most familiar passages—

“ Within the infant rind of this small flower
Poison hath residence and medicine power ;
Two such opposed foes encamp them still
In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will ;
And where the worser is predominant
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.” (Loud Cheers.)

These lines contain a brief but comprehensive moral, which may be applied not only to the stage, but to everything in life, of whatever class or quality. It may be difficult to preserve a garden free from weeds, but who for that reason would root up the flowers, or abandon them to be choked ? (Cheers.) That which contains certain advantages to society at large, surely should not be disregarded as an instrument of good because it is capable of misapplication. Its use, and not its abuse, should be rendered most prominent, and its influence encouraged as a humanizing agent in embellishing life, refining taste, and imparting knowledge. (Cheers.) Let it be remembered, in the words of our own immortal poet,

“ It is in ourselves, that we are thus and thus ;”

and that

“ There is good in everything.”

(Cheers.) The love of the drama is inherent in our nature, and must have been implanted there for some beneficial purpose. For ages it has employed the loftiest intellect, and has asserted universal sway over

the heart and mind of man. In no country throughout the world, past or present, has the poetical drama reached such perfection as in England, for the annals of genius and civilization include but one Shakespeare. (Cheers.) A stream of light has been poured upon the world's surface by that brilliant luminary which no change can darken, no time can obliterate. (Cheers.) He casts his rays over the highest and the lowest; his influence is felt by every class and grade; his authority has been appealed to by the advocate, the judge, the statesman, and the divine; he has furnished texts for science, philosophy, patriotism, affection, charity and religion itself. (Cheers.) Truly has the great moralist, Dr. Johnson, said, "Shakespeare is a mine which contains gold and diamonds in inexhaustible plenty. His plays are filled with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. From his works may be collected an entire system of civil and economical prudence." And surely Dr. Johnson was right; for where shall we find such boundless versatility of thought and reasoning, such consummate knowledge of the human heart, with all its complicated mechanism? such golden precepts to improve the conduct of life, and render men wiser, as well as better? Not a turn of thought—not a fluctuation of feeling, was unknown to him; for his comprehensive mind reached everything, glancing "From heaven to earth, from earth to heaven." His faults reflect the manners of the day, not the character of the man. (Cheers.) Had the theatre never existed there would have been no field for the exercise of this mighty genius; and who will be bold enough to assert that a mere human being was thus inspired by a benign Providence for any other purpose than the advantage of his fellow-creatures? (Loud cheers.) The stage is the surest medium through which the

precious gems of this intellectual mine can be scattered amongst the multitude; and, as actors, we may well be proud to be thus considered the trustees of this mighty treasure. It is our peculiar privilege to bring generation after generation face to face with the poet himself, giving vitality to his works in a manner which appeals to the senses, and teaches while it fascinates. The more Shakespeare is known to the million, the greater amount of beneficial influence will be spread abroad; and such a result is not to be anticipated from the student in his closet, but from the actor in the theatre. In "Murphy's Life of David Garrick" an incident is related which may not be uninteresting to the present company. It is there stated that about the year 1737, amidst the darkness which immediately preceded the advent of that wonderful actor and distinguished man, the master works of our great poet were comparatively neglected, and had given place to frivolity and folly. The drama had, in fact, sunk into an abject condition. To the honour of the ladies of that day, it is told that, feeling the unhappy degradation of the national stage, a subscription was set on foot by them to dethrone buffoonery and restore Shakespeare. (Cheers.) Should we ever again so far degenerate as to turn aside from the right path, I would appeal to "that heaven of beauty which now shines full upon us," entreating them to invoke the daughters of England to hasten to our rescue, that under their angelic guidance we may be led back from our erring way into the lost track. Then might we say with the poet—

"O woman, woman, thou wast made
Like heaven's own pure and lovely light.
To cheer life's dark and desert shade,
And guide man's erring footsteps right."

(Cheers.) My lords and gentlemen, no words of mine

can convey my gratitude for the priceless compliment you have bestowed upon me. I can only say that "my endeavours have ever come too short of my desires, yet filed with my abilities." The memory of this day will be cherished by my representatives when I am no longer amongst them, and I hope and believe will serve to stimulate the efforts of the rising actor, awakening in him the reflection that in the honourable exercise of his vocation there is one reward ever open to him which no obstacle can prevent, no prejudice can withhold—a prize above all others to which he should zealously and steadily direct his aim—respect from the respected." (Mr. Kean resumed his seat amidst reiterated peals of applause.)

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, then proposed in eloquent terms "The health of the Chairman," which was most enthusiastically received. In the course of his speech, referring to the occasion of the meeting, and the guest of the assembly, he said—"I can, too, render witness to Mr. Kean as being a public benefactor. (Hear, hear.) If anything could add to my individual satisfaction in rendering that witness, it would be the circumstance that I am politically connected by representation, and have for many years been connected, with one of the great seats of learning and education in England. (Cheers.) I see in our friend one of those who has ever asserted the social brotherhood that exists between all true and genuine instruments of human cultivation. (Hear, hear.) He has said truly that in the Drama the greatest powers of the human mind have been exhibited. This most influential instrument, which has sometimes grovelled in the mire, and which has rarely been appreciated to the full extent of its capacity, Mr. Kean has devoted almost immeasurable labour to raising up to its due and natural

elevation. This is the service that he has conferred upon the age; this is the service that we are here to commemorate; and I pray you to drink, as it ought to be drunk, the health of my noble friend, the Chairman; because he has given us the advantage of his presence, of his carefully matured thoughts, of his powerful expression, in order to convey to the world that which we feel, and that which we desire to say and record. I commend to you 'The Health of his Grace the Duke of Newcastle.' "

The noble CHAIRMAN in his reply used an expression which called forth repeated plaudits. "We are met here," he said, "without political animosity or jarring feelings of any kind, ministers in office, and ministers out of office, to join in a common tribute to one who, without being of any party, belongs to and is recognised by all."

Then followed the toast of "The Honorary Secretary," H. T. Taunton, Esq., which was also warmly responded to.

The CHAIRMAN, in eloquent and appropriate terms, gave "The health of Mrs. Kean," which produced another remarkable display from the assembled company. "I am conscious," said the noble Duke, "that I stand in the presence of that lady, and I know enough of her delicacy of mind, to know that it would be most displeasing to her, if upon this occasion, and in so large an assembly as this, I were to enter into any lengthened eulogy of her character. (Cheers.) I know that she will only value the compliment which we now pay her as reflecting upon her husband, and as showing that she has participated in all his labours. She has shared in his triumphs, and she rewards his labours by her devoted affection. (Cheers.) But I may be allowed, even in her presence, to say that she has

exhibited a bright example to the English Stage in her career. (Hear, hear.) In no respect have Mr. and Mrs. Kean brought greater honour upon their establishment—in nothing have they more distinguished themselves in their management of the Princess's Theatre, than in the interest which they have shown in the almost domestic and affectionate care which has been taken of those who are engaged there. (Great applause.) They have watched over their interests; they have watched over their morality and their happiness. (Hear, hear.) They have attended to their health; they have made the Princess's more like a great domestic establishment than a public institution in which people have no care for those who serve them, provided they fulfil the duties they have to perform. I say, then, honour to them, and especial honour to Mrs. Kean in setting so bright an example." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. KEAN in reply said—"The graceful manner in which Mrs. Kean's name has been introduced to your notice through the kindness of the noble chairman, and the enthusiasm with which that name has been received by the present company, is indeed most gratifying to me. The compliment which I feel so deeply, is, I know, equally felt by my wife. Permit me, however, to intreat that in my anxiety to spare your time, you will not estimate the amount of our mutual gratitude by the brevity of my reply. (Hear, hear.) Amidst the complicated duties of management, the director of a theatre, like the general of an army, requires the assistance of an efficient staff. Mrs. Kean has been my first aide-de-camp, and never had commander one more able and more indefatigable. (Loud cheers.) She has been my solace in the hour of trouble, my counsellor in the hour of need. Her courage never flagged, her heart never failed. I may truly quote the words of Solomon :—"She

openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Once again, my lords and gentlemen, accept my heartfelt thanks for the honour you have conferred on my partner, friend, and wife." (Prolonged cheering.)

The last toast was, "Floreat Etona," proposed by Mr. Spencer H. Walpole, M.P. He said, "We are now about to terminate our proceedings: we terminate them with this epilogue, viz., that we hope that all Eton men who succeed us will have the same good fellow-feeling towards their fellow-Etonians, that wherever they succeed honourably and nobly in life, we will be the first to pay them the compliments of that success: and success was never more signal, never more marked, and a reputation for it never more justly earned, in my opinion, than it has been by the way in which Mr. Kean has revived the noblest specimens of dramatic conception, in which he has portrayed to us the history of every country by his representations; and, let me add (for that I am creditably informed is the fact), for the noble manner in which he has protected every one who has come under his care. (Cheers.) At this late hour of the evening, I will say no more except this, that though there are many here who are not Etonians, you will, one and all of you, agree with me in this, that as long as Etonians act in the spirit of gentlemen (hear, hear), the spirit of honour and duty (hear, hear), that noble spirit of wishing their fellow-students to succeed better than themselves, so long will you drink with me the toast which I propose, 'Floreat Etona.' "

The toast was then drunk, and the band having struck up "Auld lang syne," the company separated at half-past eleven.

The subscription list for the "Kean Testimonial" will be kept open until the 1st of May, 1860. It was

announced by the Hon. Secretary that the amount already exceeded 1,000*l*. That sum will in all probability be doubled before the above-named date.

No public man, of whatever position or profession, ever received a greater compliment, or a more unequivocal evidence of public approval, than that conferred on Mr. C. Kean, on the 20th of July, 1859.

During the following five weeks, "The Corsican Brothers," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and Mr. Lovell's play of the "Wife's Secret" (not acted for seven years), were performed in succession. On Monday, the 29th of August, Mr. C. Kean retired from the management of the theatre he had so gloriously exalted. That evening wound up a season of two hundred and seventy-two acting nights, of which two hundred and forty-three were dedicated to Shakespeare. The play selected for the close was "Henry the Eighth." The receipt amounted to 306*l*. ;—the largest sum ever taken at the Princess's to a single representation.

When the curtain fell on the death of *Queen Katharine*, Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean were loudly summoned to appear. They obeyed the call, bowed their acknowledgments, and retired. Mr. Kean then came forward alone, and addressed the audience in the following words:—

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—This night concludes my managerial career. The good ship which I have commanded for nine years, through storm and sunshine, calm and tempest, is now about to re-enter harbour, and, in nautical phrase, to be paid off;—its able and efficient crew dispersed, soon, however, to be re-commissioned under a new captain, to sail once more, as I sincerely hope, on a prosperous voyage.

"It is always painful to bid adieu to those with whom we have been associated long and intimately; how

deeply, then, must I feel this moment of separation from my constant supporters, patrons, friends, never to meet again under the same relative circumstances !

“ You have accompanied me through seasons of incessant toil and intense anxiety, but your encouragement has lightened my labours, and your approbation has compensated me for manifold difficulties and disappointments.

“ I may, perhaps, be expected, on an occasion like the present, to make some allusions to the principles of management I have invariably adopted. I have always entertained the conviction that, in illustrating the great plays of the greatest poet who ever wrote for the advantage of men, historical accuracy might be so blended with pictorial effect, that instruction and amusement would go hand in hand ; and that the more completely such a system was carried out, so much the more valuable and impressive would be the lesson conveyed.

“ In fact, I was anxious to make the theatre a school as well as a recreation ; and the reception given to the plays thus submitted to your judgment, combined with the unprecedented number of their repetitions, bear, I think, conclusive evidence that my views were not altogether erroneous.

“ I find it impossible to believe, as some have asserted, that because every detail is studied with an eye to truth, such a plan can in the most remote degree detract from the beauties of the poet.

“ My admiration of Shakespeare would never have allowed me to do that which I could possibly conceive would be detrimental to his mighty genius ; nor can I suppose that this great master would have been more highly esteemed had I been less correct in the accessories by which I surrounded him.

“ I would venture to ask if, in the play of this evening, you have lost one jot of the dramatic interest, because in the ball-room at York Place, and at the *Queen's* trial at Blackfriars, every incident introduced is closely adopted from the historical descriptions recording those very events as they actually occurred above three hundred years ago? I would ask, I repeat, whether the fall of *Wolsey* has been thereby rendered less effective, or the death of *Katharine* less solemn and pathetic?

“ I would also venture to add, that I do not think you would have been more impressed with the address of *King Henry V.* to his army at Agincourt, had it been delivered to a scanty few, incorrectly attired, and totally undisciplined; instead of a well-trained mass of men, representing the picture of a real host, clothed and accoutred in the exact costume and weapons of the time.

“ I remember that when I produced the ‘*Winter's Tale*’ as a Greek play—that is, with Greek dresses, Greek customs, and Greek architecture,—an objection was raised by some, that, although the scene was situated at Syracuse, then a Greek colony, whose King consults the celebrated oracle of Delphi, yet the play was said to be essentially English, and ought to be so presented, because allusions in various parts bore reference to this country and to the period when the author wrote.

“ You would, perhaps, ladies and gentlemen, have been somewhat astonished and perplexed to have seen the chest containing the answer of the Greek oracle to the Greek King,—supposed to have been delivered above two thousand years ago—borne upon the stage by the Beefeaters of Queen Elizabeth; you would, perhaps, have been equally surprised to have witnessed at this

theatre, *Leontes*, as a Greek King, in the last act, attired as *Hamlet*, Prince of Denmark; and yet such an incongruity was accepted within the last twenty years.

“I have been blamed for depriving *Macbeth* of a dress never worn at any period or in any place, and for providing him instead, with one resembling those used by the surrounding nations with whom the country of that chieftain was in constant intercourse.

“Fault was also found with my removal of the gorgeous banquet and its gold and silver vessels, together with the massive candelabra (such as no Highlander of the eleventh century ever gazed upon), and with the substitution of the more appropriate feast of coarse fare, served upon rude tables, and lighted by simple pine torches. I was admonished that such diminution of regal pomp impaired the strength of *Macbeth's* motive for the crime of murder, the object being less dazzling and attractive. Until that hour I had never believed that the Scottish Thane had an eye to King *Duncan's* plate. I had imagined that lofty ambition, the thirst of power, and the desire of supreme command, developed themselves with equal intensity in the human heart, whether the scene of action might be the palace of a European monarch or the wigwam of an American Indian.

“In the tragedy of ‘*Macbeth*’ I was condemned for removing splendour that was utterly out of place, while in ‘*Henry VIII.*’ I was equally condemned for its introduction, where it was in place, and in perfect accordance with the time and situation.

“I was told, that I might be permitted to present a true picture of ancient Assyria in Lord Byron's play of ‘*Sardanapalus*,’ but on no account must I attempt to be equally correct in Shakespeare's ‘*Macbeth*;’—that drama

must remain intact, with all its time-honoured, conventional improprieties.

“What would the poet gain, and how much would the public lose, by the perpetuation of such absurdities? Why should I present to you what I know to be wrong, when it is in my power to give what I know to be right?

“If, as it is sometimes affirmed, my system is injurious to the poet, it must be equally so to the actor; and surely my most determined opponents will admit that at least I have pursued a very disinterested policy in thus incurring for many years so much labour and expense for the purpose of professional suicide.

“Had I been guilty of ornamental introductions for the mere object of show and idle spectacle, I should assuredly have committed a grievous error; but, ladies and gentlemen, I may safely assert that in no single instance have I ever permitted historical truth to be sacrificed to theatrical effect.

“As a case in point, let me refer to the siege of Harfleur, as presented on this stage: it was no ideal battle, no imaginary fight; it was a correct representation of what actually had taken place; the engines of war, the guns, banners, fire balls, the attack and defence, the barricades at the breach, the conflagration within the town, the assault and capitulation, were all taken from the account left to us by a priest who accompanied the army,—was an eye-witness, and whose Latin MS. is now in the British Museum.

“The same may be said of the episodes in ‘Henry V.’ and ‘Richard II.’ Indeed, whatever I have done has been sanctioned by history, to which I have adhered in every minute particular.

“To carry out this system, the cost has been enormous;—far too great for the limited arena in which it was incurred. As a single proof, I may state that in

this little theatre, where 200*l.* is considered a large receipt, and 250*l.* an extraordinary one, I expended, in one season alone, a sum little short of 50,000*l.* During the run of some of the great revivals, as they are called, I have given employment—and consequently weekly payment—to nearly 550 persons; and if you take into calculation the families dependent on these parties, the number I have thus supported may be multiplied by four. Those plays, from the moment they first suggested themselves to my mind until their final production, occupied each about a twelvemonth in preparation.

“In improvements and enlargements to this building, to enable the representation of these Shakespearean plays, I have expended about 3,000*l.* This amount may, I think, be reckoned at or above 10,000*l.*, when I include the additions made to the general stock, all of which, by the terms of my lease (with the exception of our own personal wardrobe), I am bound unconditionally to leave behind me on my secession from management.

“I mention these facts simply as evidence that I was far more actuated by an enthusiastic love of my art than by any expectation of personal emolument. Having said thus much, I need not deny that I have been no gainer in a commercial sense. More restricted notions, and a more parsimonious outlay, might, perhaps, have led to a very different result; but I could not be induced by such considerations to check my desire to do what I considered right, and what would, in my opinion, advance the best interests of my profession. Whatever loss I have sustained is amply recompensed by the favour you have bestowed upon my efforts.

“So far, indeed, from regretting the past,—if I could recall the years gone by, with renewed health and

strength, I would gladly undertake the same task again, for a similar reward. I do not now retire from the direction of this theatre through any feelings of disappointment, but from the remembrance of the old adage, —‘The pitcher goes often to the well, but the pitcher, at last, may be broken.’

“Mind and body require rest, after such active exercise for nine years, during the best period of my life, and it could not be a matter of surprise if I sunk under a continuance of the combined duties of actor and manager of a theatre, where everything has grown into gigantic proportions. Indeed, I should long since have succumbed had I not been sustained and seconded by the indomitable energy and devoted affection of my wife.

“You have only seen her in the fulfilment of her professional pursuits, and are, therefore, unable to estimate the value of her assistance and counsel. She was ever by my side in the hour of need, ready to revive my drooping spirits, and to stimulate me to fresh exertion.

“I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without correcting an erroneous impression which has, to some extent, gone abroad—that in retiring from management I also contemplate retirement from the stage. I have neither announced, nor conceived such an intention; but, on the contrary, I hope, if my life is spared, at least, for a limited number of years, to appear as an actor.

“The necessity of fulfilling a long round of provincial engagements will cause a considerable time to elapse before I can again have an opportunity—should such an opportunity ever arise—of meeting my London friends; but though far away, memory will constantly revert to the brilliant scenes I have witnessed here, and

conjure up visions of the bright eyes, encouraging smiles, and gratulating voices, which have so often cheered me on my course. I can never forget that, whatever triumphs I may have achieved—whatever reputation I may have won—whatever I may have been enabled to accomplish towards the advancement of dramatic art, I owe to you—my best friends, to you—the public.

“Let me fondly cherish the hope that you will sometimes bestow a thought on the absent wanderer; and, confiding in your sympathy and regard, I now respectfully and gratefully take my leave, bidding you ‘Farewell—a long farewell.’ ”

Throughout this speech, which Mr. Kean delivered with great feeling and earnestness, he was repeatedly interrupted by the cheers and acclamations of the audience, upon whom every point told, and who really appeared as if parting from a valued friend.

With regard to the general system of his management we have spoken in detail in the course of our observations on the series of Shakespearean revivals. He also explained it so clearly in this his farewell address, that any further remarks on that topic would be superfluous. The internal economy of the Princess’s Theatre under its late ruler, being less open to public notice, may call for a few passing observations. The conduct of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean towards all who were employed under them was invariably marked by kindness, consideration, and liberality. In all theatrical engagements it is a general rule that salaries cease when the actors are either ill, or absent from any other cause. At the Princess’s, these stoppages were never enforced. No matter how long might be the indisposition of the absentees, they were always paid in full. In addition to this, extra medical aid and invalid indulgences were

frequently furnished to those who were unable to supply themselves. On more than one occasion, delicate females received payment during the vacations, that they might neither exhaust themselves by overwork, nor lose their ordinary means of support. The salaries were constantly increased without application, and when a valuable actor once solicited a loan to relieve him from pressing embarrassment, he received 100*l.* as a free gift. The rehearsals, it is true, were long and numerous, but Mr. and Mrs. C. Kean never exacted from others the labour they did not freely participate, and never shrank from the task of general instruction. Now and then, an impatient spirit, wincing under severe discipline, might murmur a complaint; but the great majority saw the completeness of the result, and acknowledged the advantages conferred on all. The school has ceased, but its lessons will not readily be forgotten by those who imbibed them.

Mr. C. Kean's career as a manager has passed into a subject for history. For years he may still continue to delight the public with his unrivalled powers of acting, and will in all probability add many thousands to his realized fortune; but he cannot ascend to a loftier eminence of fame than that which he has already reached, while neither time nor rivalry can wither one leaf of the laurel crown he has so triumphantly won. He has encountered many obstacles, but enduring courage has enabled him to set them all aside. He owes much to his own self-reliance, based on upright principles, with innate integrity of heart and purpose. His genius has never burned with a flickering light; his perseverance has never faltered on the roughest track. The public, for a long series of years, have never chilled him by indifference or cold applause. He has been fortunate, but he has thoroughly deserved his

prosperity. And, in summing up the favouring agencies that have smoothed his path, and accelerated his progress, let us name, with just acknowledgment, the warm, unflinching, and powerful advocacy of the high and independent portion of the press;—that mighty organ—which has ever proved his sure citadel of strength, against a few stubborn, though unavailing attacks of prejudice and personal hostility.

A P P E N D I X.

Vol. ii. p. 71.

NOTICE ON "FAUST AND MARGUERITE," from "*Punch*," of 6th of May, 1854 (copied into *Lloyd's* of May 7th), accompanied by a Caricature of MR. C. KEAN.

POODLE MEPHISTOPHELES AT THE PRINCESS'S.—"No man, like a Frenchman, can trim a poodle. This, we believe, may be conceded as a national merit. No man, like a Frenchman, can so quickly teach a poodle so many tricks; to fetch and carry; stand on three legs; pick letters from a biscuit alphabet; and, in a word, do all the things that make the cleverest of dogs. The skill of perfect teaching cannot be denied to the patience and intelligence of French genius; and, assuredly, Mons. Carré has marvellously vindicated the Gallic ability by so trimming and teaching Goëthe's Poodle, *alias Mephistopheles*, that his originator would never know him again.

"Seest thou the black dog"—says *Faust* to *Wagner*—"ranging through the corn and stubble"?

Faust. "Mark him well! For what do you take the brute.

Wagner. "For a poodle who, in his way, is puzzling out the track of his master.

Faust. "Dost thou mark how, in wide spiral curves, he quests round and ever near us? and, if I err not, a line of fire follows upon his track.

Wagner. "I see nothing but a black poodle.

"Such was the conviction of Mons. Michel Carré ; and so in 1851, he goes to work, and trims and shapes Goëthe's poem of *Faust* into a thing for the French stage : and the thing—poodle-like—having had its run upon all-fours in Paris, may now be seen under the very moral management of Mr. Charles Kean, in Oxford-street. A mere poodle ; and—for a poodle—one of the dullest dogs that ever defeated a teacher. But that the poodle should have been trimmed by a Frenchman was, doubtless, its excelling recommendation to a manager who prefers his plays, even as his gloves, to be of Paris make. They can be so stitched to fit, and be held so easily in hand !

"For what could the startled, confounded manager have done with the *Mephistopheles* of Goëthe ? He would have shaken at its power ; and haply, have transgressed under it like a poodle itself scared and frightened by Jove's thunder and lightning. Now, poodle *Mephistopheles*, as trained and taught by Mons. Carré, was an animal not beyond the powers of the master of the Princess's revels—a puppy-dog to be led in a string, or carried under the arm, even as puppy-dogs are tethered or borne by flunkies.

"'Driven behind the stove'—(raves *Faust* of the real poodle, Goëthe's poodle) 'it is swelling like an elephant ; it fills the whole space ; it is about to vanish into mist. Rise not to the ceiling ! Down at thy master's feet ! Thou seest I do not threaten in vain ; I will scorch thee with holy fire. Wait not for the thrice-glowing light. Wait not for the strongest of my spells.'"

"Now here are thunderbolt words, and scathing conjurations, that a common manager, a merely simple provider for a simple public, can hardly be expected to confront and live through. And these things are Goëthe's poodle : but the Frenchman teaches the dog to answer to a very different sort of order : hence, when the poodle or *Mephistopheles* of the Princess's enters upon his two legs, he runs in with no more of the devil in him than may be expected of the dullest of footmen, with just enough of speech to be stupid upon any subject, and on the very shortest notice. Never was poodle cut so bare—shorn

so close that the very skin has been nipped by the scissors, and still shows the unsightly wounds—never was poor poodle so maltreated as Goëthe's tremendous black dog by the irreverent Frenchman. Nevertheless, an easy critic has declared in favour of M. Carré's dog, as it appears in the hands, or upon the arms of Mr. Charles Kean,—saying in justification of the clipping and exposure of the poodle, as shown at the Princess's—

“‘One person, if he had now been living, would have decided on the wisdom of the manager, who having an effective Easter piece in view, selected the low-art fabrication of M. Michel Carré, in preference to the high-art creation of the German poet. The person we mean is—Goëthe himself.’

“Just as it might be said, ‘one person, when Mr. Charles Kean shall enter into an Elysium, will at least step forward and embrace him for his acting of Shakespeare. with every conceivable and inconceivable scenic effect, and the person we mean is—Shakespeare himself!’ Even as Goëthe might hug and thank Michel Carré for his ‘low-art fabrication’ (his low cutting of the jacket of the poodle), so will Shakespeare embrace Mr. Charles Kean for *his* fabrication with very low cuttings of Cibber's *Richard the Third*. Wonderful must be the sources of gratitude in the Fields of the Blest !

“The *Faust and Marguerite*—at the Princess's—shows Mr. Charles Kean to be a born spectacle-maker. Wonderful is the process by which all the poetry, all the grandeur, is discharged from Goëthe, the imagination and subtleties of the Master being supplied by the pulleys of the machinist and the colours of the scene-painter ! Everything of life and beauty has been extracted, and a *caput mortuum*—that is, Charles Kean's *Mephistopheles*—remains.

“And yet Mr. Kean never acted so naturally in all his life. He was quite *down* to the part ; his perceptions of the poetic trotting upon four legs. He, no doubt, felt the triumph of common-place, and rejoiced in his element. We have been accustomed to associate with *Mephistopheles* a devilish subtlety : a laughing spirit in the eye, burning like a burning-glass. Mr. Kean was more consonant with his poodle-trimmer : he had

no more subtlety in his speech than the waiter at the Dog Tavern ; nothing more scorching in his looks than might flash from brass buttons. There was boldness, but no burning.

"Some of the scenic effects are very beautiful, and worthy of the Princess's as a gallery of illustration. The vision of *Marguerite*—(thanks to *Marguerite* herself!) was very lovely ; and the procession to the Cathedral showed that the manager had been a profound observer of the condition and demeanour of people going to prayers. The sprinkling of babies was very judicious and a little touching.

"The musical contest for the soul of *Marguerite* between the demons under the stage, and the angels over it, was somewhat bold upon a moral English public : but when the soul of *Marguerite* in white muslin, borne by angels in satin petticoats was carried to heaven ('without wires,' cries a critic, hysterical with admiration)—the delight of the gods was perfect.

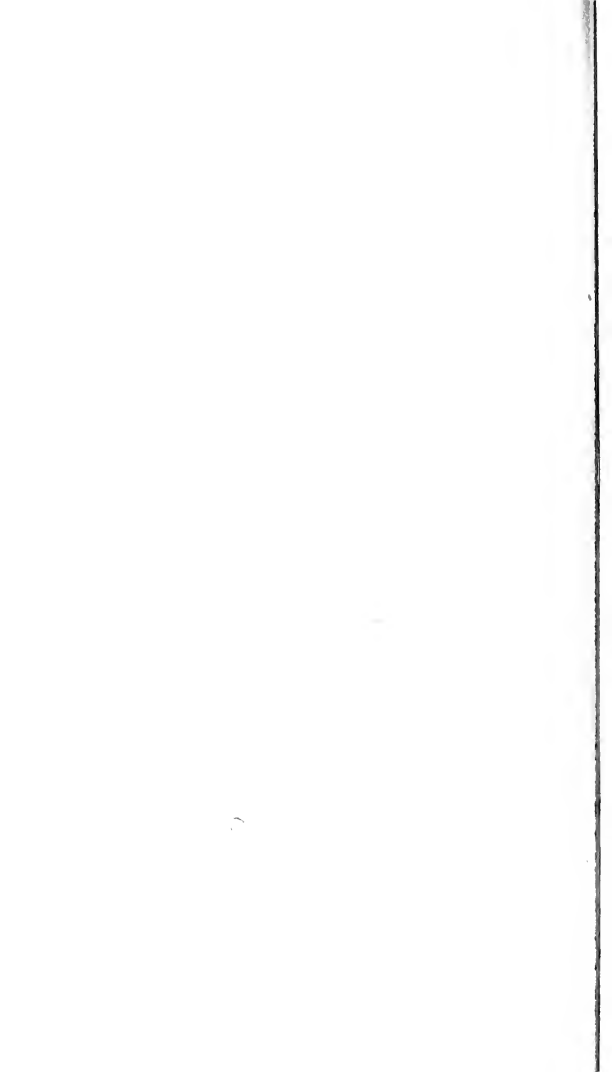
"The morality of *Marguerite*—as painted (in rouge) by M. Carré—gives us rather *Marguerite* from the Palais Royal than *Marguerite* from the well. We would advise Mr. Kean to take a view of the latter, so exclusively painted by Miss Howitt. It *may* do him good, as a royal and moral manager.

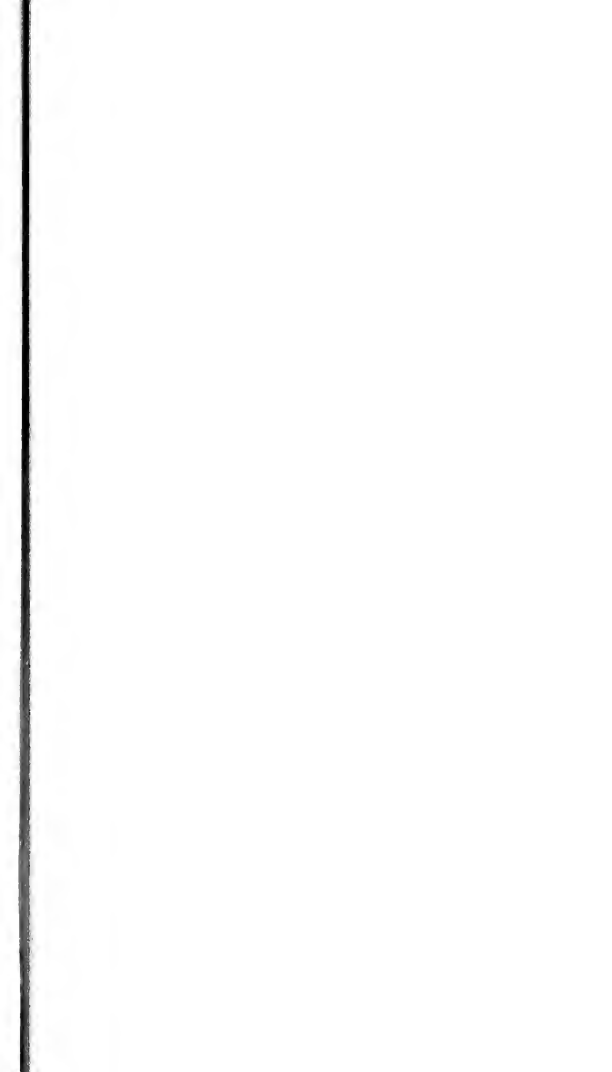
"As a piece of show and mechanism (wires unseen) *Faust* and *Marguerite* will draw the eyes of the town ; especially the eyes that have least brains behind them. It is the very triumph of vulgar showiness, uninformed by a spark of genius. Mr. Kean's poodle is all over a very dull dog ; a dog without a bit of the wag in him, even in his tail.

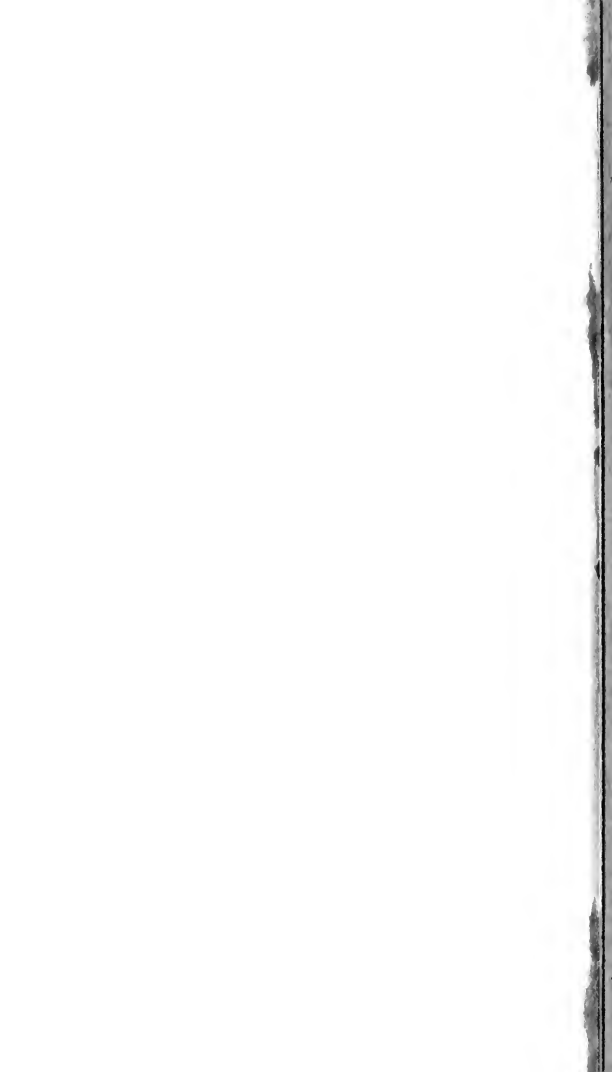
"Nevertheless there is one triumph due to the actor. His new nose is perfect : it has the true demoniacal curve. We never saw a better view of the Devil's Bridge."

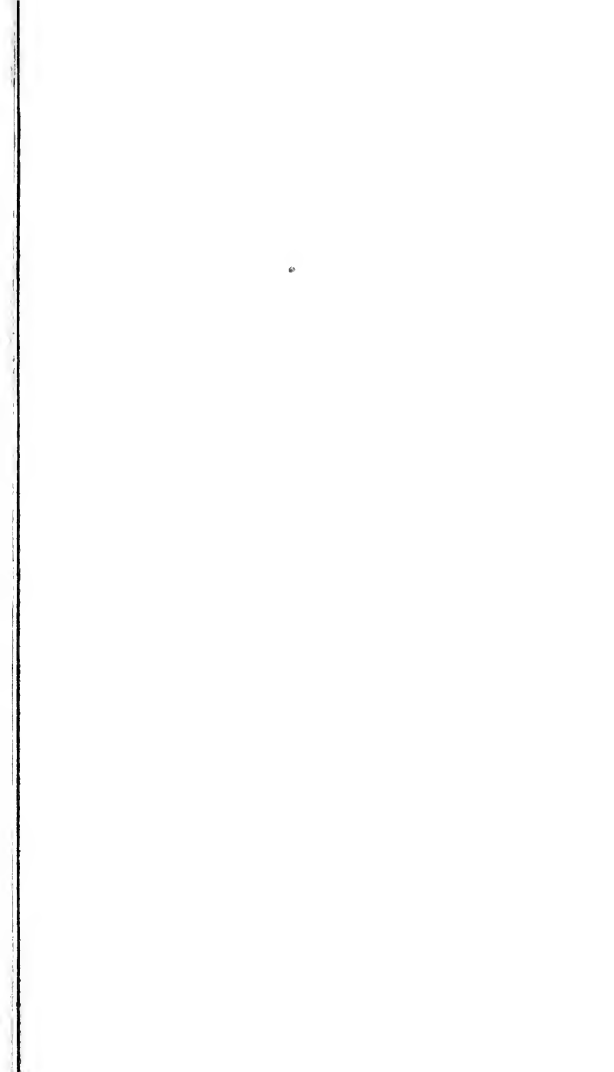
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